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258

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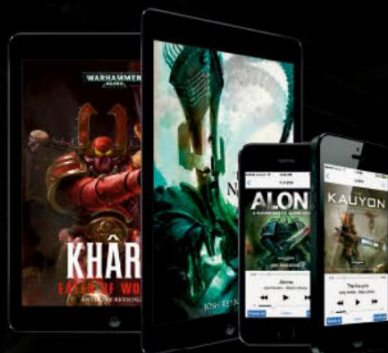
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"EVERYONE WAS  
WEATHERED BY WHAT  
THEY WENT THROUGH  
IN THE FIRST MOVIE"



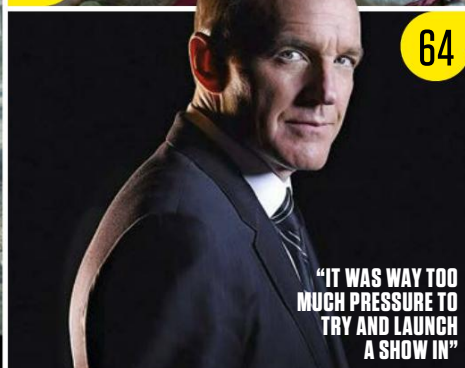
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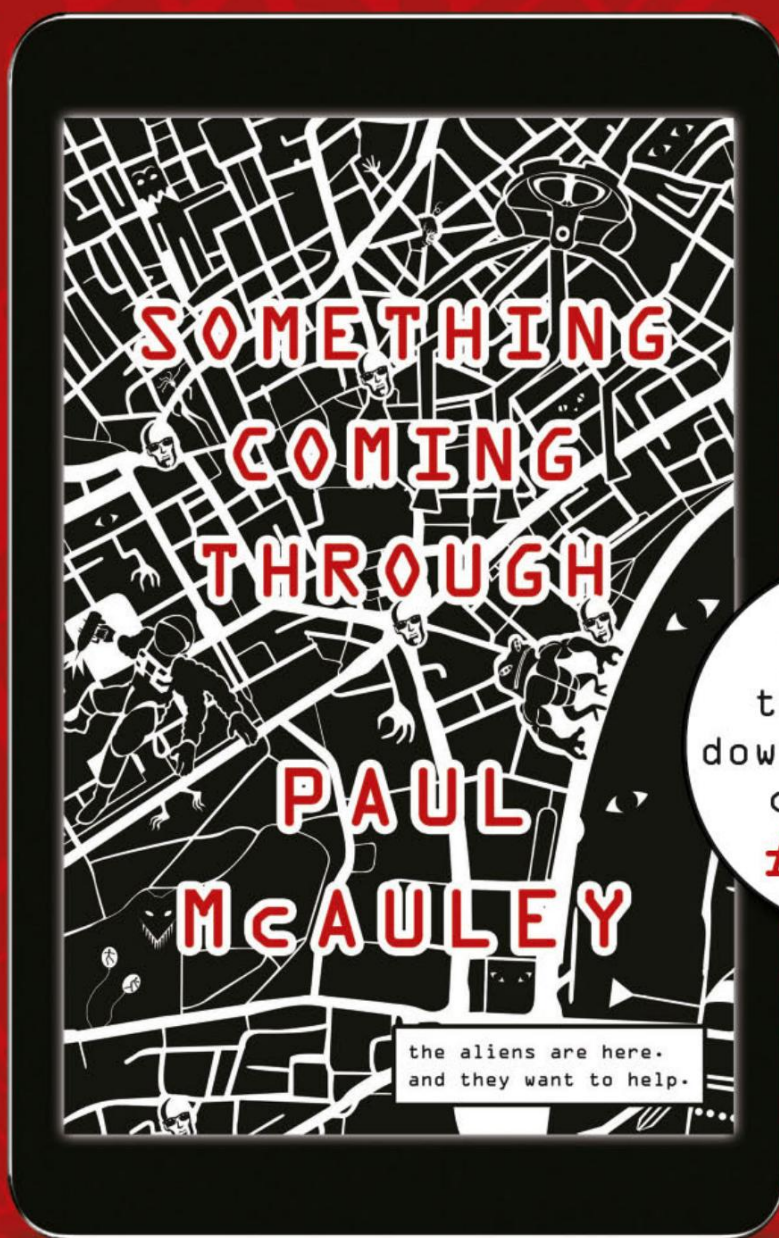
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## THE INSIDE SKINNY

What your *SFX* chums are thinking about...

### RICHARD EDWARDS EDITOR

#### RAVES

► Absolutely delighted that Jenna Coleman is staying in *Doctor Who*.

#### RANTS

► How can it be 10 years since *Battlestar Galactica* began? We're still yet to see another sci-fi show like it.  
► I loved *The X-Files*, but it makes me sad that Fox are looking to bring it back. The last movie suggested the old magic is long gone.



### NICK SETCHFIELD FEATURES EDITOR

#### RAVES

► Loving *Agent Carter*. How about some other period-piece Marvel shows? Just imagine a Silver Age SHIELD caper, Steranko meets *Mad Men*...

#### RIP

► Sad to hear of the passing of Brian Clemens. He made *The Avengers* an enduring masterpiece of offbeat British charm.



### IAN BERRIMAN HOME ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

#### RAVES

► I love Paul Kaye, so I'm really looking forward to seeing him and his tramp beard in *Doctor Who*.

#### RANTS

► The cancellation of *In The Flesh* is so unjust.

#### RIP

► Sad to hear about the death of Brian Clemens. A rewatch of *Captain Kronos* is called for.



### JORDAN FARLEY COMMUNITY EDITOR

#### RAVES

► Late to the party, but *Attack On Titan* is incredible. Like, I-binge-watched-11-episodes-in-one-night incredible.  
► No better performance in SF over the last year than Michael Keaton in *Birdman*.

#### RANTS

► Hey, UK TV channels, why haven't you picked up *Agent Carter*? It's bloomin' brilliant.



### ALEX COX OPERATIONS EDITOR

#### RIP

► Tim Roberts - The ECW Zombie, who I wrote about in *SFX* 255 - has sadly passed away at age 38. Being a pro wrestling fan fills me with guilt at times like this; the wear and tear of an impossible lifestyle doing impossible things all too frequently robs families of their loved ones - just so I can be entertained. Imagine if this happened in Hollywood...



### RUSSELL LEWIN PRODUCTION EDITOR

#### I'M BACK!

► Yep, I've returned after a little break. Well, it seemed like a good idea.

#### RAVES

► Borderline fantasy *Birdman* is like nothing else I've ever seen. Exhausting but unique.  
► I may not have been keen on the last series of *Doctor Who* but I thought "Last Christmas" was a very enjoyable return to form.



### JONATHAN COATES ART EDITOR

#### RAVES

► Finally caught up with some of the SF big hitters that I missed in the cinema during the course of last year: loved *X-Men: Days Of Future Past*, especially seeing the old cast back together; *Dawn Of The Planet Of The Apes* was visually stunning; *Godzilla* was an enormous disappointment - so dull.  
► Great ending to the *Hobbit* saga!



### DAVE BRADLEY GROUP ED-IN-CHIEF

#### RAVES

► I love the two *Raid* movies so if the rumours are true about Iko Uwais and the gang appearing in *Star Wars* I'll be as happy as a droid in an oil bath.

#### RANTS

► No love for *The Lego Movie* in the Oscars? Not even in the animation category? Weird.  
► *Ant-Man* trailer was a bit po-faced but Paul Rudd was - as he always is - very cool.



### ADRIAN HILL AD MANAGER

#### RAVES

► Every now and again a film comes along that really sparks the imagination, and this film is *Robot Overlords*. It looks like a fantastic '80s SF adventure set in Northern Ireland - I predict big things for this home-grown movie.  
► The wait is almost over for the return of *The Walking Dead*! More brain-eating entertainment to pass these dark, dark evenings then.



### SAXON BULLOCK FREELANCE WRITER

#### RAVES

► The *Who* Christmas special was an inventive delight. The show hasn't been this interesting and dangerous in years.  
► The more I see of *Mad Max: Fury Road*, the more gloriously demented it looks. Can't wait.  
► *The third Hobbit* - two and a half disappointing hours of loose ends and boss fights.



### MIRIAM McDONALD FREELANCE WRITER

#### RAVES

► Toby Frost's *A Game Of Battleships* is great. I love the way Frost mashes up *Apocalypse Now* and *My Little Pony*.  
► I've got to see *Kingsman*. You can't beat a good spy adventure.

#### RANTS

► Can a UK broadcaster please take on *Agent Carter*? Please? Crazy that it's not on over here.



### ROSIE FLETCHER ACTING EDITOR, TOTAL FILM

#### RAVES

► *Ex Machina* is brilliant. I'm a little bit obsessed with it and think about it all the time.  
► I'm a juror on the inaugural James Herbert Award For Horror Writing so I'm tearing through vast numbers of horror novels right now and it's brilliant. Can't sleep a wink for the nightmares, mind, but I'm loving it anyway.



Hollywood is always looking for the "new" something or other, whether it's the new *Star Wars*, the new *Harry Potter*, or the new *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*. So ever since *The Hunger Games* - itself hailed as the new *Twilight* for a time - became a smash hit franchise, everyone's been looking for someone to follow in Katniss Everdeen's footsteps.

*The Divergent Series* is the closest we've come so far, a post-apocalyptic teen franchise set in a future where - as in *The Hunger Games* - the Powers That Be keep order in unconventional (but very sci-fi) ways. The first movie was far from perfect, but there was also plenty of potential in Tris Prior's story, and in Shailene Woodley the saga has one of the most in-demand actors on the planet. We flew out to LA for a chat with her, as well as speaking to the filmmakers about why *Insurgent* will be much bigger than its predecessor (see page 46).

Speaking of the "new", it's now a whole decade since Russell T Davies brought the TARDIS back to our screens - hard to believe, eh? We've looked back through more than a decade of archives to give you a unique history of new *Who* - if we can still call it that.

Will the latest incarnation of *Doctor Who* feature in your voting for the *SFX* Awards? You can give us your opinions on the best 2014 had to offer in our poll (details on page 21) - let battle commence!

Rich

Richard Edwards, Editor  
@RichDEdwards

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Postal address: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA • Editorial email: [sfx@futurenet.com](mailto:sfx@futurenet.com)  
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# THE DEATH HOUSE

*Sarah Pinborough*

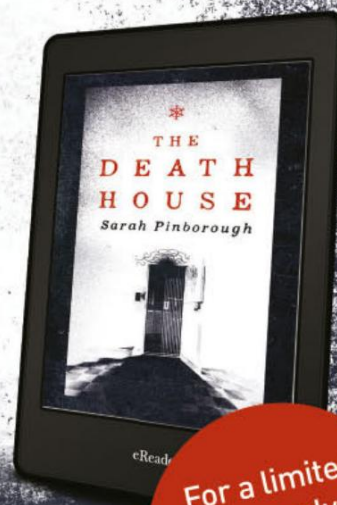
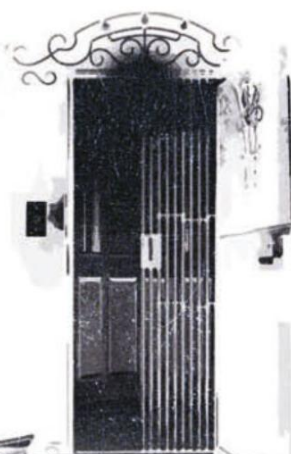
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IRVINE WELSH, AUTHOR OF *TRAINSPOTTING*

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# RED ALERT

THE FUTURE FIRST

edited by Jordan Farley

CHAPPIE

## Child's Play

*District 9* duo journey back to Johannesburg for an unusual coming of age story



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WARS**

Britain is conquered by metal invaders in *Robot Overlords*.



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**LOOK WHO'S  
BACK**

Titan celebrates 10 years of new *Who* with a Ninth Doctor miniseries.



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**WEIRD  
SCIENCE**

Laurence Fishburne has a close encounter in *The Signal*.

**A**FTER HIS BLISTERING, multi-Oscar nominated debut *District 9*, director Neill Blomkamp's 2013 follow-up *Elysium* suffered from a classic case of difficult second album syndrome. With his new film *Chappie*, the story of a sentient robot who learns about life in the real world, Blomkamp is returning to early principles – co-writing with his wife Terri Tatchell (*Elysium* was scripted by Blomkamp solo), filming in Johannesburg and taking inspiration from one of his own shorts, “Tetra Vaal”. Though as Tatchell explains, *Chappie* is more than a simple adaptation.

“‘Tetra Vaal’ isn’t really a short film, it’s an

advert, there’s no story in it really,” she tells Red Alert. “I almost buckle at the fact Neill’s idea is considered an adaptation because I feel *Chappie* is an original film.”

The pair found the experience of writing *District 9* so all-consuming that working together again was almost off the cards for good. “When he pitched *Chappie* to me at that point we said we’d never work together again, but I literally fell to my knees and said, ‘Please let me write this with you. I love this idea.’

“Writing *Chappie* was no problem at all, but I was so passionate about *District 9*. It changed and evolved so much that I would wake up in the middle of night, shake him awake and say, ➔





Hugh Jackman sports a very non-Wolverine hairdo for the film.

# EVOLUTION THEORY

Bringing the bot to life

## THE NAME GAME

**1** Unless you grew up in or around South Africa, there's a pretty good chance you won't know the story behind the film's unusual title. "Chappie is a type of childhood South African bubblegum that Neill grew up with," says Terri Tatchell. "Yo-Landi, when we first told her about the film, got the image of Chappie - the little chipmunk that they have on the chewing gum - tattooed onto herself. So there was a little bit of pressure to actually get the film greenlit! I don't know whether that gum still exists or not."

## THE WRITE STUFF

**2** In comparison to *District 9*'s year-long script-writing stage, penning *Chappie* was a doddle. "The first draft only took three weeks," Tatchell says. "That was *Chappie* written for South Africa. Then there was a period where we thought it was going to have to shoot in LA. So we rewrote it for LA, and that took about two months, I think. And then we combined the two scripts to go back to Johannesburg again. If we were organised enough and still had that first script to look at, it would probably be very, very close to what was ultimately shot."

## BAD HAIR DAY

**3** Fans might be surprised to see that Hugh Jackman's character Vincent sports a dubious mullet in *Chappie*, a do Tatchell says was in the script from the start. "It was definitely in the script, but I can't take credit for it, Neill designed that character. I don't know if I would dare do that to anybody! It makes me smile just thinking about it. It's pretty funny. He was such a good sport about it. He Instagrammed a picture of himself the day he got it. He's such an amazingly good sport, he's ready to throw himself into anything."

## HOME COMFORTS

**4** Being a filmmaking family means Blomkamp and Tatchell's home is filled with memorabilia. "These things just come home. Our house is filled. We have a droid from *Elysium* that greets people at our front door. He actually had a cowboy hat on last time I looked. We have a life-sized model of Little CJ, the little alien from *District 9*, he's on our mantel. At the head of our dining room table we also have the probation officer that interviewed Matt Damon in *Elysium*. So I'd be a fool to think a few Chappies weren't going to show up."



**SCI-FACT!**  
Rather than use motion capture Chappie was created by animating over Sharlto Copley's actions on set.



We doubt RoboCop would ever do anything like this.

## MURPHY'S LAW

**5** Although the look of Chappie was inspired by the rabbit-eared cyborgs from classic manga *Appleseed*, the story bears some resemblance to sci-fi classic *RoboCop*. "You walk around our house and there are ED-209 figurines everywhere, so I would say *RoboCop* influences our daily lives! But I would say the two are very different. I think Neill just writes exactly what's in his brain and in his heart and doesn't worry much about anything else. The emotional parts of *RoboCop*, to me, are special to *RoboCop*. *Chappie* has different things going on."

'I know what we need to do!' So when we worked on *Chappie* together, we had rules. One of the rules was we never discussed it at home. And we never really discussed it face to face, even when we were writing. We would email everything to each other."

Set just one year in the future, *Chappie* is the story of the eponymous law enforcement bot (voiced and performed on set by Blomkamp regular Sharlto Copley) – a defective unit tossed out and "acquired" by local gangsters Ninja and Yolandi (of South African rap group Die Antwoord). On the outside he's programmed with true artificial intelligence by the robo cops' brilliant creator Deon (Dev Patel), who strongly disapproves of the company Chappie is keeping.

"Ninja and Yolandi sort of become his surrogate parents, much to Deon's horror," Tatchell says. "They're all incredibly flawed and you fall in love with them despite that. They try to do the best they can with what their belief system is, and the cards they've been handed."

Blomkamp has made a name crafting muscular, tech-driven action movies with a social conscience, but Tatchell approached *Chappie* from a different angle. "Neill and I often disagree over what the film's about – which I think is a good place to come from because hopefully different things show up in there," Tatchell explains. "AI is definitely a theme he is fascinated with. I'm a little more character driven. So rather than the big scope science theme, I'm more fascinated with the relationships between the different characters

## "We never discussed the film face to face. We would email each other"

in the story and the effect that their influence might have on the violence of *Chappie*."

Unusually for Blomkamp it's also consciously a comedy. Think *Short Circuit* meets *RoboCop*. "The first trailer was all very happy and sweet, and the second was very action film, but the reality is that the film is everything," Tatchell says. "My favourite parts of *Chappie* are the funny parts. The middle of the film to me is absolutely hilarious."

Humour may be integral to *Chappie*, but there's also a deadly physical threat in the form of Hugh Jackman's Vincent – a former soldier who doesn't trust Deon's synthetic police force, and sees the birth of AI as a threat to the future of humanity. Under the instruction of Sigourney Weaver's company big wig, and with an ED-209 like droid on his side, Vincent sets out to hunt Chappie down.

"Vincent's a purist. He doesn't believe artificial intelligence is a good thing for the world. He would like to stamp it out – for personal reasons, as well as moral reasons," Tatchell says. "In writing, there were a lot of different variations. Even in shooting and in editing the character was shaped a lot of different ways."

After a brief foray with LA (and space) in *Elysium*, Blomkamp is returning to familiar haunts with *Chappie*, shooting and setting the film in Johannesburg. "The *Chappie* Johannesburg is completely different than the *District 9* Johannesburg," says Tatchell. "When we were writing it, I wasn't sold on it being set in Johannesburg. But once we went there I thought: 'Oh, it's got a completely different industrial vibe.' It's a different world than you've ever seen before." **SFX**

*Chappie* opens in the UK on Friday 6 March.



Once upon a time there was a defective robot...





THE WHISPERS

# Youth In Revolt

The kids are anything but alright in Spielberg's unsettling new show

**LEAVE IT TO STEVEN** Spielberg to turn something as innocuous as a child's imaginary friend into something downright spine-chilling. As executive producer of ABC's new genre thriller *The Whispers*, Spielberg, along with creator/co-executive producer Soo Hugh and showrunner Zack Estrin, explore a disturbing spate of suburban children doing some very dark things (including attempted murder and maiming) at the behest of their invisible companion Drill.

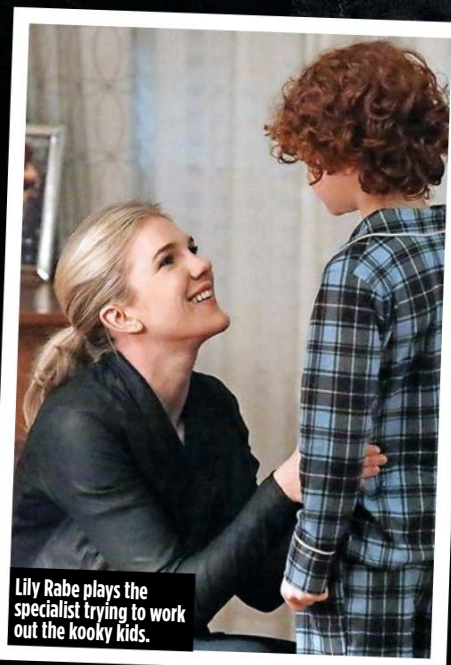
Of the creepy premise, co-President of Amblin Television Darryl Frank explains that Spielberg "loved the provocative idea of 'What would happen if someone, or something, was controlling your kids and making them do bad things?' It plays into what he does, which is the scariest things are the things that happen in your own backyard and your own house."

Anchored by some disquieting performances by child actors Kylie Rogers (Minx) and Kyle Harrison Breitkopf (Henry), FBI child specialist Claire Bennigan (Lily

**"The characters are not at all who you thought they were at the start"**

Rabe) tries to dig into the psyche and secrets of these creepy kids. Showrunner Zack Estrin explains, "These kids are all chosen for a very specific reason based on who they have access to. They will all have tasks that they are asked to do and questions they are being forced to answer. To us, it's about how far will these kids be taken. It's not an evil kid of the week show. It's a character drama, a thriller, a mystery and a genre show wrapped up into one."

Touting the strength of their mini thespians as a huge selling point when it comes to the unsettling tone of the series, Estrin enthuses, "The kids are a central part of the show and bring *such* a unique thing to television. They are intrinsic to the plot."



Lily Rabe plays the specialist trying to work out the kooky kids.

Meanwhile, genre veteran Milo Ventimiglia (*Heroes*) is also a major player in the overarching mystery, showing up in the pilot as a bedraggled amnesiac also drawn to these child-precipitated events. "When you first meet John Doe in half bloodied scrubs, he's bearded with hair down past his chin, covered in tattoos. Things are scrawled on him. He has no knowledge of anything for several months back," Ventimiglia teases. "He has no idea who



AERIAL  
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SF TV ROUND UP



NEWBIES

► Guillermo del Toro bringing his long-mooted fantasy film **CARNIVAL ROW** to Amazon as a series. The show will be set in a Victorian-tinged city where a serial killer is preying on mystical creatures.

► Sky 1 making **APOCALYPSE SLOUGH**, a series set in the Berkshire town in the lead up to the end of the world. Rob Lowe is set for the lead.

► TNT orders supernatural drama **BREED**, about a string of brutal murders committed by mysterious creatures, to pilot. Justin Chatwin will star as the cop on the case.

► Syfy developing **51ST STATE** about a world where America has bought Greenland and turned it into a frontier prison colony.

► Kung fu is making a comeback. NBC's filming a pilot for female-led fantasy martial arts show **WARRIOR**.

► *Rise Of The Planet Of The Apes*' Rupert Wyatt making 10-part sci-fi thriller **ECHO CHAMBER** for HBO.

► Fox orders **FRANKENSTEIN**, about a cop brought back from the dead, to pilot.

© REX (1)

DON'T QUOTE ME

"[Turning it down was] the worst thing that happened to me. I really wanted to do it... I would have taken the costume home and said, 'Jools, let's make love!'"

Thank Smaug Jamie Oliver wasn't able to cameo in *The Hobbit*.

SCI-FACT!

*The Whispers* is based on Ray Bradbury's 1951 short story "Zero Hour" from *The Illustrated Man*.

MY SCI-FI

# Chris Hadfield

The YouTube sensation astronaut reveals the sci-fi that inspired him



FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY TV

► Sci-fi was hugely influential for me, especially when I was young. I was a little kid when *Star Trek* first came out. The whole idea of a spaceship on some five-year mission gave them a lot of freedom to address any issues they wanted to, from comic stories like "The Trouble With Tribbles", to stories that really made you think – and I really enjoyed the characters and the adventure of it. I liked *The Next Generation* as well.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY MOVIES

► The crossover of the science fiction and fantasy of *2001: A Space Odyssey* into science fact was what really turned me into who I am – that mental expansion and stretching of what might be possible. And then to have it underpinned by the race to the Moon was just an unbeatable one-two punch for convincing me what I oughta do with the rest of my life. I also thought *Blade Runner* was fascinating to watch, *Alien* and *Aliens* were really well told stories, and the *Terminator* stories were thoughtful as well. I really like *Galaxy Quest*, because the crossover between the fantasy and the reality is completely blended, and the people's reactions are very human.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY BOOKS

► The *Foundation* trilogy was fascinating to read, *I, Robot* I found really good and Ray Bradbury's *Martian Chronicles* was such a bizarre, interesting, artistic exploration. The Bradbury family just asked me to write a new introduction to it, so that was a really interesting chance to re-read the book. His addressing the issue of what alien life might actually mean, and how we would view it through our filter of human understanding was really interesting to read, especially now, having lived in space for half a year.

*You Are Here: Around The World In 92 Minutes* is available now.

he is or where he's going but he has an inherent pull to be in those places."

Could he be the Drill the children speak of? "Is he good or bad or in the middle?"

Ventimiglia muses. "You can't quite make out exactly what he's there for, but you know it's ominous and dangerous. He's somehow connected to these happenings with these children and you don't understand how. When he's knocked over by this massive Grand Mall seizure, he's [then] in the hospital speaking Arabic, so the guy is such a mystery. We need to follow him closely and watch because it's got to be linked to the greater picture."

As to how much of the mystery is worked out by the creative team, Estrin asserts that they have a last shot for the season with the doors wide open for more mythology should the show take off. But more importantly, Estrin says the show is worth the ride. "We're selling a show about mystery. I think part of the adventure is the unravelling of that and we do have answers but I think it's more interesting to wonder for a little while. One of the things that is cool about the show is that as it goes on, it opens up more and more. Each episode is more intricate. The characters change and are not at all who you thought they were in the beginning. There's a real sense that week to week you will get some satisfying reveals."

*The Whispers* premieres this spring on ABC.





## ROBOT OVERLORDS

# Die, Robot

**FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...**  
the family-friendly adventure where killer bots have conquered Britain



### IT'S AN '80S THROWBACK

**1** From the director of top horror-comedy *Grabbers*, Jon Wright, *Robot Overlords* finds Britain under robot rule. Their only demand? Stay in your homes. It may sound like the set-up for a dreary dystopian tale but the story has been inspired by kid-driven Amblin classics. "Our biggest influences were those '80s alien movies, because we'd grown up watching films like *ET* and always wondered why no one had set one in the UK," says co-writer Mark Stay. "By using kids we thought we could take characters we know and put them in a situation that had a blockbuster feel to it."

### THERE'S A KINGLY CAST

**2** The film focuses on the youngsters who escape captivity in the hopes of finding the fighter pilot father of Sean Flynn (Callan McAuliffe), but boasts some heavyweight adult actors in the form of

Gillian Anderson and Sir Ben Kingsley (above), who plays a weaselly robot sympathiser. "Ben Kingsley plays this wonderful character called Mr Smythe, a twisted geography teacher," Stay says. "He's someone who's quite happy to betray all of mankind to further his own ends. Sean is offered that choice. He could turn to the dark side."

### RISE OF THE MACHINES

**3** The robots who police the human population come in several shapes and sizes but have one common directive – incinerate curfew-breaking humans on sight. "They're very efficient and design-specific," says Stay. "So the Sniper is literally a gun on legs. The Drone is just a pair of wings and a gun like a bee sting. The Sentry robot has a psychology behind it. The idea is the robots studied us for decades before they invaded and discovered we were frightened by people with tiny brains, but big muscles. The flipside is the Mediator, where they created

a robot to appeal to us in a childlike way – only they got it very, very wrong..."

### EVERYONE'S GROUNDED

**4** It may feature extraterrestrial man-killing machines, but the makers were keen for *Robot Overlords* to feel real. "I'm a huge *Star Trek* and *Doctor Who* fan, so I'm fine with technobabble, but Jon wanted there to be very practical solutions," says Stay. "We had long conversations about the reality of some of these sci-fi ideas and how realistic they were, within the context of the film."

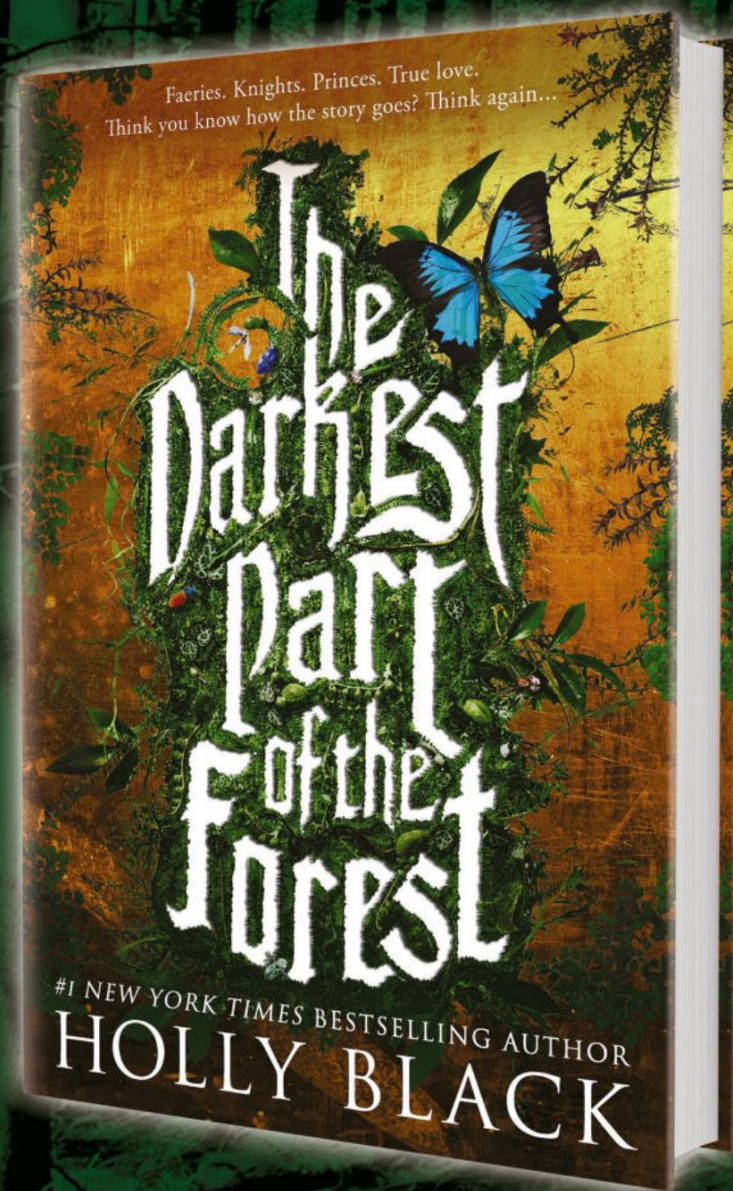
### A NOVEL IDEA

**5** Unusually the film's screenwriter has also turned his pen to the novelisation. "The problem with a lot of film tie-ins is they're often an afterthought," Stay explains. "It's far from the golden age of film tie-ins, with Donald F Glut and Vonda N McIntyre. We had a week of rehearsals for the main kids in the film and Jon asked me to do the backstories for each of them. As I'm doing these backstories I'm thinking, 'This is the beginning of the novel.' So I had a good six- to eight-month head-start on most tie-in authors. I was on set. I knew the actors. If they improvised a great line I gleefully stole that to make myself look good. And it came together really well. It's a companion piece. You'll see the film; you'll read the book; and the two will complement each other perfectly." **SFX**

*Robot Overlords* the book is published on 12 February. The film opens on 27 March.



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#DPotF





DOCTOR WHO

# Doctor's Orders

Eccleston returns in celebratory comic

**J**UST IN TIME FOR THE tenth anniversary of *Doctor Who*'s return, Titan is adding Christopher Eccleston's Ninth Doctor to their stable of *Who* comics. Written by *Who*-ology author Cavan Scott and illustrated by Blair Shedd, the five-issue miniseries will focus on the Time Lord's most overlooked modern incarnation.

"There's no getting away from how important Christopher Eccleston was for *Doctor Who*," Scott tells Red Alert. "As Russell T Davies has said, Eccleston kicked the door open again after the show had been off the air for so long. People sat up and took notice of his casting, and he totally dominates the screen in each and every scene of those 13 stories."

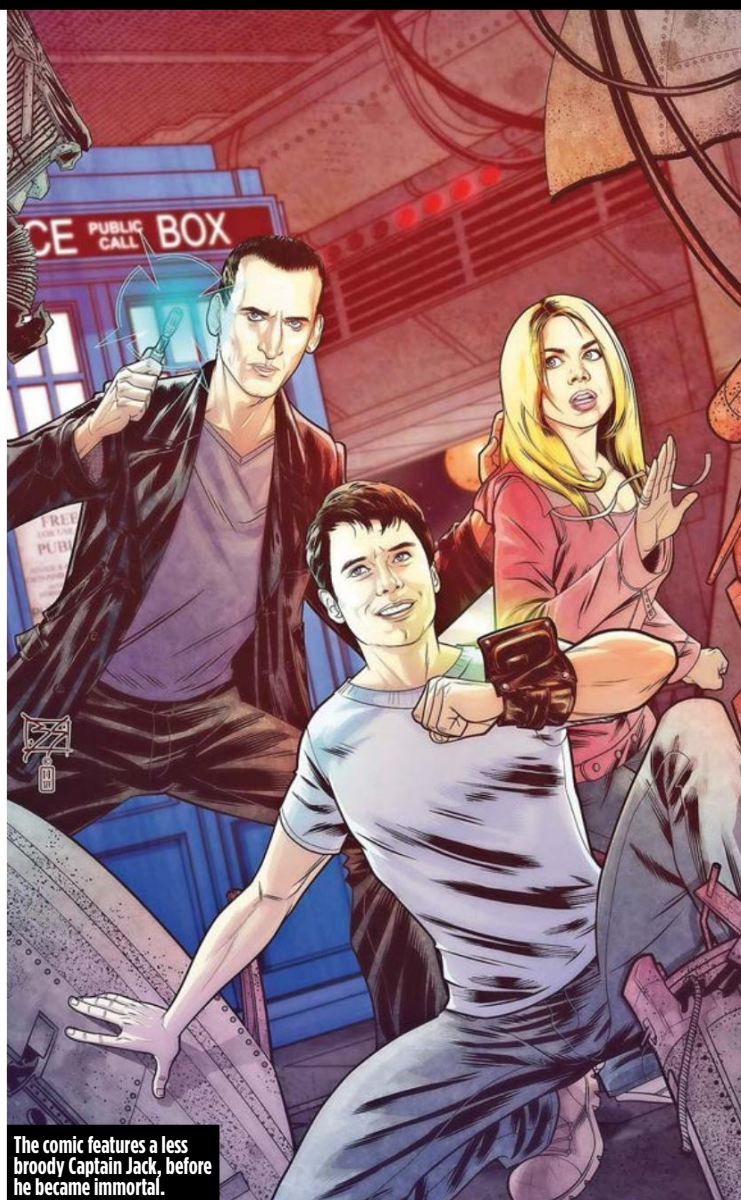
"The Ninth definitely has a darkness to him as he's someone who's learning how to be the Doctor again, after the horrors of the Time War," continues Scott. "He's quick to anger – as we show in the comic – but there's also a lightness to him. Watch the episodes again and you'll

be surprised just how much enthusiasm and sheer joy emanates from him."

More cosmic than the Ninth Doctor's TV adventures, "Weapons Of Past Destruction" finds the Doctor dealing with the immediate consequences of the Time Lords' disappearance. "With Gallifrey apparently destroyed, there's a vacuum of power," explains Scott. "So would another race of time travellers step up to police the Time Vortex? Would they be better or worse at it? And how would the Doctor react to someone stepping into his people's shoes?"

Describing them as a "sometimes forgotten TARDIS trio", Captain Jack and Rose Tyler are also along for the ride. "They're so much fun to write. We only saw Jack and Rose together for a few episodes on TV, but their dynamic together is great. There's lots of banter and quips, and they don't let the Doctor get away with anything!" **SFX**

*Weapons Of Past Destruction* is available from Wednesday 11 March.



The comic features a less broody Captain Jack, before he became immortal.

HIGH RISE

# Rising To The Top

Ben Wheatley is bringing Ballard to the big screen

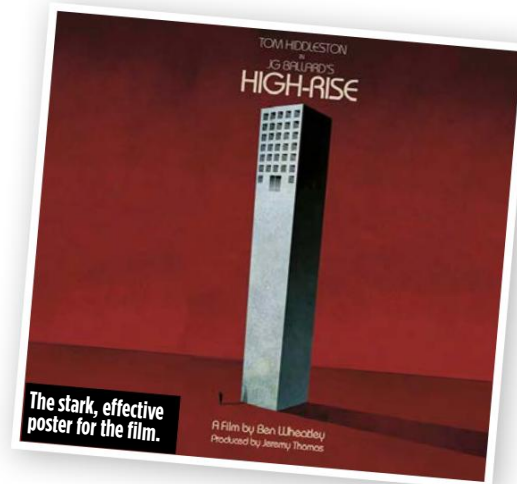
**●** AFTER THE BIG BUDGET EXTRAVAGANZA OF *The Hobbit*, Luke Evans fancied a change of pace with *High Rise*. Helmed by *Kill List*'s Ben Wheatley, the adaptation of JG Ballard's dystopian thriller was shot over a hectic six-week period in Belfast.

"It's mental!" Evans tells Red Alert. "Films like this don't really get made any more so I'm glad to be part of it. It's incredibly different to everything else I've done. It's the '70s, so the period has got a very specific aesthetic and personality. Ben Wheatley is nothing short of a genius."

Centring around Tom Hiddleston's young doctor Robert Laing who is embroiled in growing social unrest after moving to a luxury block, Evans plays

Richard Wilder, a documentary filmmaker who has been ostracised for criticising their decadent lifestyles. "He's the agitator but he's more than that," he explains. "As the film unfolds, you see that he's shrouded in slight craziness, although he's probably the sanest person in the whole high rise. But it's only as the film develops that you understand that and see this man, who has been struggling to keep hold of reality but totally losing it at the same time."

*High Rise* was first optioned by producer Jeremy Thomas after its publication in 1975. "It's a super dark book," says Evans. "JG Ballard was a genius! His daughter came to the set, which was



The stark, effective poster for the film.

really nice and she said that he would be very proud of what we were doing. Just to see it being made is great for a start, because it's taken a long time – 30 years to be precise!" **SFX**

*High Rise* is released in UK cinemas later this year.



## STAR TURN

# Lily James

The *Downton* star stepping into Cinderella's glass slippers for Disney's latest mythical epic

## CHILDHOOD CLASSIC

▶ "*Cinderella* is a story that everyone in the world has grown up with. What's so terrifying and so brilliant about it, even when we were just rehearsing it, was that the script was just so good. It really delves deep into the story, which is incredibly sad and very moving. The beauty of these stories and what Disney films do so well is that it teaches kids through these fairytales about things like grief and loss and strength and goodness. It's really empowering."

## WORKING WITH A LEGEND

▶ "Working with Kenneth Branagh was just amazing! He's the most insightful, generous and warmest director, and I think what he's done with the story is just completely magical. He's got a big heart and that really comes through in the film."

## JUST LIKE THE ABBEY

▶ "There wasn't actually much of a difference between filming *Cinderella* and making *Downton*, as *Downton* is just so incredibly huge anyway. It felt the same. The only difference is the size of the production on *Cinderella* as we had much bigger sets and much bigger crews. But everything else was more or less the same. But it was funny because *Cinderella* has a very interesting cast just like *Downton*, and I've gotten to work with all these great English actors on both of them. And Sophie McSherry, who plays Daisy on *Downton*, was with me anyway as she's one of the Ugly Sisters in *Cinderella*, so it felt like having a bit of *Downton* out at Pinewood."

## RAGS TO RICHES

▶ "With what happens to Cinderella, that's essentially what happens to Lady Rose in *Downton* as well. Cinderella goes from having this comfortable lifestyle, where she's brought up in a lovely house. Suddenly, she's reduced to being a servant, so she goes from this graceful life to a really hard one. But she manages to maintain her goodness and positivity, which is a bit like with the servants in *Downton*, who still have a laugh while they're scrubbing our shoes, dressing us and serving our food. It's a mad world; it's really crazy!"

*Cinderella* will be at the ball on Friday 27 March.





LIFE IS STRANGE

Developers wanted an indie, film festival feel.

# Strange Days

Solve a French missing person mystery



**B**LOCKBUSTER-APEING ACTION games form the backbone of the videogame calendar, but games that evoke the feel of indie films are much harder to find. *Life Is Strange* from French developers Dontnod is doing just that.

"A big influence for us is the mood of independent movies," says Dontnod co-founder Jean-Maxime Moris. "It's why we created this unique art style by hand-painting every object in the game. And why the soundtrack is an indie-folk mix of licensed tracks and original music."

Split into five episodic chapters, *Life Is Strange* is the story of Max, a student who can rewind time. Having left Arcadia Bay years prior, Max returns to discover her former best friend Chloe has taken a rebellious turn after the death of her father and the disappearance of her friend Rachel. Despite the game's welcoming, painterly look it's clear something bad's going down.

"The peaceful mood is very deliberate," says Moris. "But there is something dark lurking in Arcadia Bay that the player will investigate, and the first step of this is the disappearance of Rachel."

For Dontnod, whose last game *Remember Me* took the blockbuster route, *Life Is Strange*'s episodic nature stemmed from a desire to focus on character and story.

"We have a strong story to tell... People are used to splitting a strong story arc into sections that have mini story arcs of their own. We live in an HBO generation and this is definitely a factor in the resurgence of narrative-driven games." **SFX**

*Life Is Strange* episode one is available now on PS4, PS3, Xbox One, Xbox 360 and PC. Episodes 2-5 will be released over the coming months.

## AERIAL ASSAULT SF TV ROUND UP



### CASTING CALL

► Marvel and Netflix have found their **LUKE CAGE**. *Halo: Nightfall*'s Mike Colter will play the super strong ex-con.

► **THE WALKING DEAD**'s LA set spin-off series casts *Deadwood* star Kim Dickens as the female lead.

► *Spartacus* actor Liam McIntyre, *Dexter*'s Devon Graye and *The Tomorrow People*'s Peyton List sign on for villainous roles in **THE FLASH**.

► Lucy Lawless and Stuart Townsend are heading to **SALEM** for the witchy show's second season.

► John Rhys-Davies, *Arrow*'s Manu Bennett and *Pan's Labyrinth* star Ivana Baquero all set for MTV's **SHANNARA**.

► Admiral Adama (aka Edward James Olmos) to play Robert Gonzales in the second half of **SHIELD**'s second season.

► Former Ghostbuster Ernie Hudson to appear as Poseidon in episode 15 of **ONCE UPON A TIME**'s fourth season.

► *Chuck*'s Zachary Levi joining the cast of **HEROES: REBORN**.

► *Glee*'s Melissa Benoist will be the new **SUPERGIRL** for CBS.

© REX (1)

DON'T QUOTE ME

"I'm very excited to return to the strange and wonderful world of *Twin Peaks*. I look forward to seeing all of you there. May the forest be with you"

Kyle MacLachlan announces his return to *Twin Peaks* in style.

### SCI-FACT!

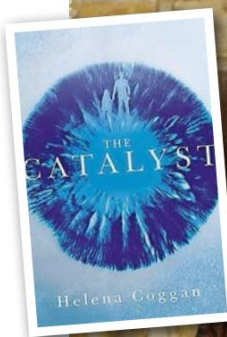
According to Dontnod, Square Enix were the only publishers willing to keep *Life Is Strange*'s main character female.

## NEW AUTHOR

# Helena Coggan

The 15-year-old author swapping school books for sci-fi

Helena began writing the story when she was just 13.



### HOW WOULD YOU SUM UP *THE CATALYST*?

► It's in part about secrecy – about learning to cope with the knowledge that if anyone truly knew you, they would think you repulsive, and knowing that they would be at least half-right. But I also wanted to write a teenage girl who had far more important things to deal with than the usual pressures put on teenage girls: who wasn't beautiful, and wasn't well-liked, and yet could not care less, because she was too busy trying to stop a war.

### HOW LONG DID YOU WORK ON IT?

► From writing the first scene to finishing the proofs, almost exactly two years. I wrote it on weekends, after I'd finished my homework, and in my lunch breaks at school.

### HOW DID YOU GO ABOUT BUILDING THE WORLD OF THE BOOK?

► I knew my main character would be a monster, and I set about altering the world I knew to accommodate her. I wanted to set the wonders of magic against the half-amused world-weariness of 21st century London. And doing that turned out to require an apocalypse, which is always fun to write.

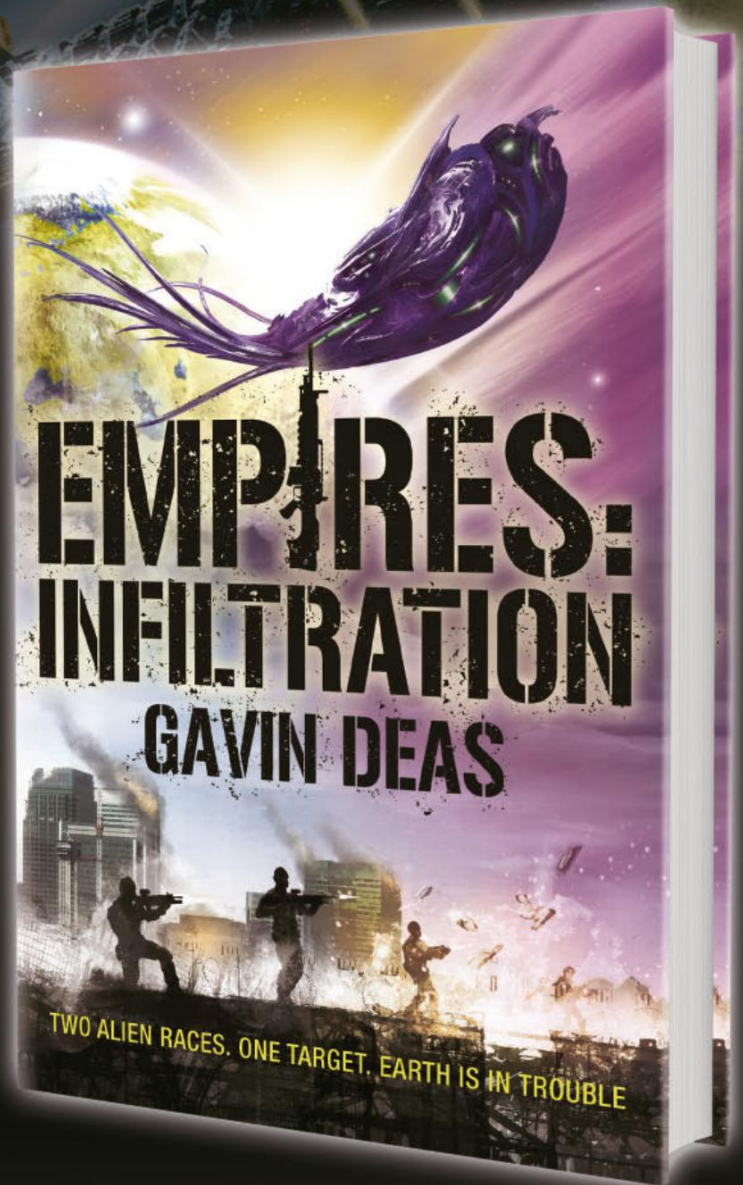
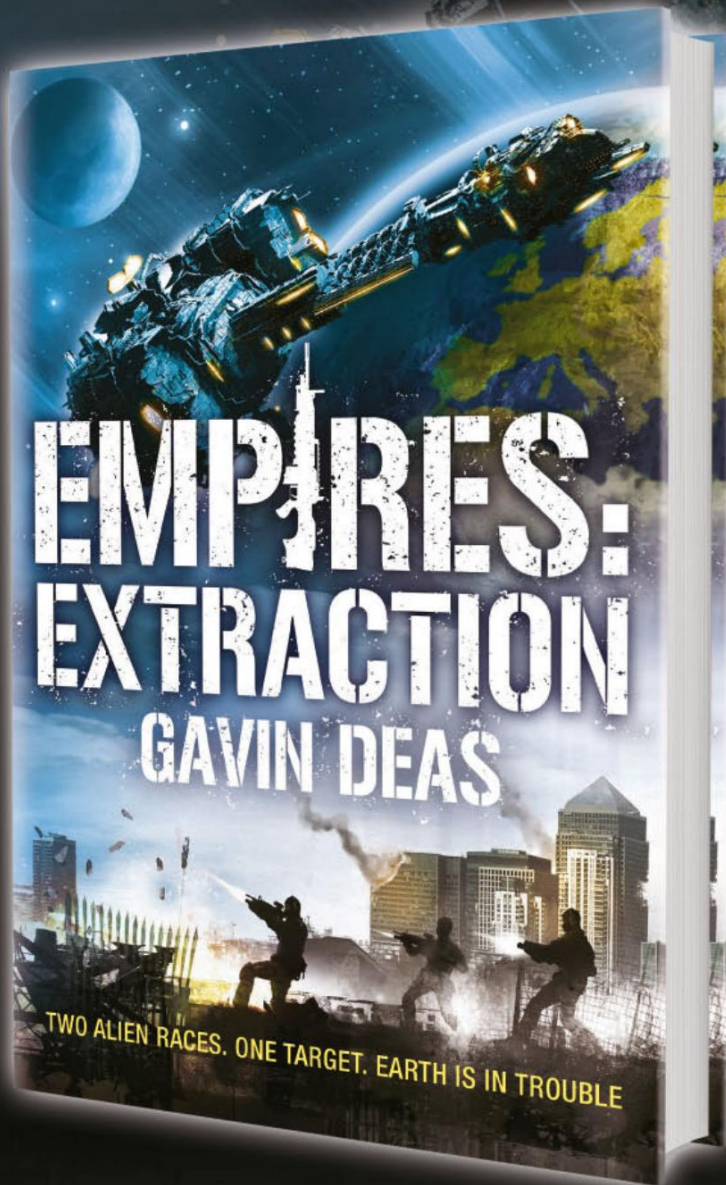
### WHICH SF/FANTASY AUTHORS WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE COMPARED TO IN A DREAM REVIEW?

► Oh, any of them. All of them. My favourite authors when I was younger were always SFF: JK Rowling, naturally, Derek Landy, and Stuart Hill, who wrote the *Icemark Chronicles*, which I used to read over and over. And of course I love the classics: *The Midwich Cuckoos*, *The War Of The Worlds*.

*The Catalyst* is published on 19 February by Hodder & Stoughton.



# TWO ALIEN INVASIONS. TWO HEROES. ONE STORY.



**"Gavin Smith and Stephen Deas pile on the exotic technology and visceral action, offering military SF grounded in blue-collar soldiering"** *FINANCIAL TIMES*





AFTERLIFE #100

# Lou Ferrigno

The Hulk in *The Incredible Hulk*

**C**AN YOU BELIEVE it, Afterlife is 100 issues old! And it barely looks a day over 40. To celebrate we spoke to genuine sci-fi icon Lou Ferrigno about his defining role, the Hulk. Ferrigno shot to fame after featuring in 1977 body-building documentary *Pumping Iron*, and was cast as the mean green muscle man in *The Incredible Hulk* TV series the same year. Five seasons of enraged shirt-ripping between 1978 and 1982 were followed by three TV movies in the late '80s. Ferrigno's time as the Hulk didn't end there though – he voiced the gamma-infused strongman in the 1996 cartoon, the Edward Norton-starring *Incredible Hulk* movie, *Avengers Assemble* and the upcoming sequel *Avengers: Age Of Ultron*. He can next be seen as axe-wielding warrior Skizurra in *The Scorpion King 4: Quest For Power*, available on DVD and Blu-ray from 23 March.

## WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLAY THE HULK AGAIN?

Well, I do the voice of the Hulk for *The Avengers*, so I'm still playing him in some ways. But of course, definitely. People still love the series.

## WHAT'S THE STRANGEST REQUEST YOU'VE EVER HAD FROM A FAN?

Women come to the table when I do autograph signings sometimes and they want me to sign private body parts and it's hysterical. One woman came to me and she had me sign my

signature on both legs. She came back to me two years later and she had the signature tattooed on both legs – her husband wasn't too happy about it!

## WOULD ANY OF THE HULK'S ATTRIBUTES HAVE BEEN USEFUL IN REAL LIFE?

The strength, of course, but not his short temper. After the Hulk I did *King Of Queens* for seven years and they always made Hulk jokes, and jokes about my strength, so it helped me get a job! The Hulk will be with me forever, even though I've done over 40 films. I still embrace the Hulk because it's a part of me.

## IS THERE ANYTHING YOU THINK WAS UNFINISHED ABOUT THE HULK'S STORY?

In the TV show he was supposed to come back with *The Return Of The Hulk*, but then Bill Bixby passed away. We were going to continue doing movies of the week. It's amazing after 40 years that the legacy of the Hulk is more popular than ever. Everyone loves the Hulk.

## DID YOU GET ANY SOUVENIRS FROM THE SET?

I never got anything from the show, but I do have one of the largest collections of Hulk memorabilia in the world. I'm going to have a big auction of it. I have toilet paper, wallpaper, bicycles, you name it.

## WHAT WOULD IT SAY ON THE HULK'S GRAVESTONE?

We left an impact in this world, I will never be forgotten.



**SCI-FACT!**  
The first Afterlife featured William Sanderson, aka JF Sebastian in *Blade Runner*.

# The Best Of Afterlife

The greatest moments from the last 100 issues

ISSUE 161 | OCTOBER 2007

## #4 Mary Tamm WHAT'S THE STRANGEST REQUEST YOU'VE EVER HAD FROM A FAN?

A guy said at a convention that he'd named his son after me. I said "Mary?!" and he said, "No, Tamm – Tyler Aaron Michael Martin or something, and he said, "Because he's named after you could I ask you to be his godmother?" I said, "No, I'm really sorry, because it means something to me to be a godmother" – it's a religious ceremony, not something that's just based on a name. So he looked a bit crestfallen. But you have to be firm!

ISSUE 251 | SEPTEMBER 2014

## #93 Tom Lenk DID YOU GET ANY SOUVENIRS FROM THE BUFFY SET?

No, they wouldn't let us take any of that stuff. I tried to take my clothes but then they chopped them into pieces and turned them into little bits on the turning cards! I do have the original outline for the last episode, which is kind of confidential. I don't know what to do with it – it's kinda clutter in my house.

ISSUE 171 | JULY 2008

## #14 Dave Prowse WOULD YOU HAVE LIKED TO HAVE ANY OF DARTH VADER'S SKILLS IN REAL LIFE?

I think I'd like to have his skills to shut people up. Just point to them and you'd see them choke a bit, keep them quiet for a while. I'd like to have been able to do that.



ISSUE 193 | APRIL 2010

## #35 Erin Gray DID YOU WISH YOU'D HAD ANY OF WILMA'S SKILLS IN REAL LIFE?

At the time I was doing that character I was involved in a domestic violence situation at home. For me, going to work was putting on the cloak of being a powerful woman. She led the way.

ISSUE 180 | MARCH 2009

## #23 Kane Hodder WHAT'S THE STRANGEST REQUEST THAT YOU'VE EVER HAD FROM A FAN?

I have been asked to kill some family members in the past. I still remember the first time I ever got that request. I presumed it was just a joke. So I laughed and looked up at the guy and said, "Okay, sure, we can manage that," and he, um, wasn't laughing back at me. He was totally serious. I have been asked this five times now. Each time I worry about the person who is asking me it.

ISSUE 195 | JUNE 2010

## #37 Ingrid Pitt WHAT DO YOU THINK IT WOULD SAY ON COUNTESS DRACULA'S TOMBSTONE?

"I am the greatest woman you could ever meet." Think about it – she was quite sexy, wasn't she? I was sexy too, of course. It was a great role!



ISSUE 209 | JULY 2011

## #51 Michael Biehn WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLAY REESE AGAIN?

No. I think I played as well as I possibly could. I worked a little bit on T2, and after that I became less interested. When Jonathan Mostow made three I didn't see that. I started watching four, I was confused, it was too loud, everything was blowing up, I couldn't even watch it.

ISSUE 214 | NOVEMBER 2011

## #56 John de Lancie IS THERE ANY TECHNOLOGY FROM *STAR TREK* YOU WISH WAS REAL?

I want that thumb to be working... When I was getting on a plane recently someone in the queue said, "You could snap your fingers and get us here." I told him: "The thumb doesn't work on Sundays."

ISSUE 228 | DECEMBER 2012

## #70 Alex Winter DID YOU GET ANY SOUVENIRS FROM THE BILL AND TED SET?

I used to have my head from the second film as a doorstop in my house for years. And then it rotted so I had to throw it away.

ISSUE 216 | JANUARY 2012

## #58 Sophie Aldred WHAT WOULD IT SAY ON ACE'S GRAVESTONE?

"I beat up a Dalek with a baseball bat." Although actually I think that's going to be on Sophie Aldred's gravestone too...





# VOTE NOW!

## THE SFX 20 YEARS SCI-FI AWARDS



### IT'S JUDGEMENT TIME!

Yes, forget the Oscars, bin the Baftas and melt down those Golden Globes – these are the only awards that matter in this quadrant of the galaxy! Here's your chance to tell us who's rocked and ruled the SF realm over the last year\*, from the screen to the page. Will *Game Of Thrones* slay *Doctor Who*? Will *Guardians Of The Galaxy* blast ahead of *Interstellar*? Choose your faves, cast your votes and we'll unmask the winners in an upcoming issue! And because it's our 20th anniversary this year, we'll also be celebrating some of the heroes of our lifetime!

#### THE CATEGORIES

BEST FILM • BEST DIRECTOR • BEST TV SHOW  
BEST NEW TV SHOW • BEST TV EPISODE • BEST NOVEL  
BEST COMIC BOOK • BEST VIDEOGAME • BEST ACTOR  
BEST ACTRESS • BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT  
BEST VILLAIN • HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

CAST YOUR VOTE AT:  
**GAMESRADAR.COM/SFX-AWARDS**

Poll is open from Wednesday 4 February until midnight on Tuesday 3 March 2015.

\*Eligibility period is anything released/published from 1 January-31 December 2014 – with the exception of Hope For The Future, which obviously applies to the, er, future.





**SCI-FACT!**  
3,500 storyboards were created for *Fury Road*, roughly the same as the number of shots in the film.

RELEASE DATE  
**15 MAY 2015**

# FREEZE FRAME

**THIS MONTH:**  
Buckle up – it's the thrilling new trailer for **Mad Max: Fury Road**



● “My world is fire and blood...” and sand by the looks of it.



● Tom Hardy's Max Rockatansky isn't much of a talker, with around 20 lines in the entire film.



● Immortan Joe, *Fury Road*'s big bad, is played by Hugh Keays-Byrne, who starred as Toecutter in the first *Mad Max*.



● Most of *Fury Road*'s action sequences were filmed for real in the Namib Desert...



● ...though we suspect a smidge of CG was used to create this colossal sand wave.



● You can't be a group of crazed maniacs without your own symbol to brand people.



● Charlize Theron plays Imperator Furiosa, the one-armed leader of a refugee group who Max helps traverse the desert.



● Nicholas Hoult's Nux has a strange definition of a “lovely day”.



● Man mountain Nathan Jones is, ahem, Rictus Erectus, the son of Immortan Joe. Nice gun(s).



● Forget in-car stereos, these war rigs have their own percussion sections on the back.



● A chastity belt you wouldn't want your todger anywhere near.



● The end of the world never looked so good.

## THE BUZZ

IAN



I'm usually indifferent to cars flipping in the air and things going boom, but this trailer presents them with an almost balletic grace. And the desert looks glorious – it's like they're racing on Mars!

RICH



This is the trailer as an artform; the edits, captions and classical music fusing into a beautiful whole. But best of all is the action – visceral, expansive and real. I'm now excited about *Fury Road*.

DAVE



All-new *Mad Max* was on my Not Bothered list... until this marmalade-hued trailer. The musical mayhem, the desert action – this trailer's making me want to queue up at the Odeon today.

RUSSELL



One of the things I like most about this, the most orange trailer I've ever seen, is the classical music. Bravo! Asides from that, Hardy looks the part and the action seems suitably dazzling.

ROSIE



This is going to be operatic (including the score, which is actually operatic)! I love the filth and the desolation and how brilliantly spectacular and over the top it looks. So looking forward to it.





**SCI-FACT!**  
Christy Marx gave the  
Holograms the same surnames  
as scientists working on  
holographic tech.

Brenton Thwaites's  
Nic looks like he might  
have had better days.

THE SIGNAL

# Tune In, Freak Out

William Eubank channels the spirit of *The Twilight Zone* in new film about visiting aliens

**D**RIVING ACROSS THE country to California, MIT students Nic (Brenton Thwaite), Jonah (Beau Knapp) and Haley (Olivia Cooke) decide to make a detour into New Mexico to track down a hacker who has been taunting them online. But instead Nic finds himself trapped in an underground facility controlled by a mysterious doctor (Laurence Fishburne) wearing a hazmat suit, who provides more questions but no answers.

*The Signal* is the second feature from William Eubank, director of 2011's *Love*, about an astronaut stranded on the International Space Station. "I was finishing editing my last film and I was talking with a good friend of mine, David Frigerio, and my little brother about getting into a project about people who have been abducted but don't realise they have been abducted, similar to a *Twilight Zone* type of thing," says Eubank, who co-wrote the script with his two fellow conspirators. Unlike his claustrophobic debut, the backdrop for *The Signal* is the sun-baked landscape of New Mexico. "We would get these really wild dust storms out there," says Eubank. "We were shooting some of the bigger, heavier stuff at the end and this crazy windstorm just added to the intensity of the moment. Sometimes nature

would help us and then sometimes nature would completely shut us down, so it was a double-edged sword."

Eubank was keen to explore New Mexico's long association with alien encounters in the film. "I grew up loving the romanticism and the mystery of Area 51," he says. "I love things that get into clichés or tropes in a roundabout way, they don't start looking like they are going in that direction and then suddenly they are. It's a fun way to explore the things that we know in pop culture."

But *The Signal* doesn't come at the aliens head-on. "There are a lot of fishbowl shots and the fish are representative of a world and perspective that only they can know. They're stuck in that bowl," he says. "I always thought that if aliens really wanted to study us they would have to create something that can communicate and work with us. If we wanted to study beetles we'd have to make some strange little beetle that could actually communicate and talk with other beetles. It's just a weird concept that we applied to the movie." **SFX**

*The Signal* opens in cinemas on 27 March.

Is Laurence Fishburne about to present this year's Budget?



## JEM AND THE HOLOGRAMS

# Comeback Queens

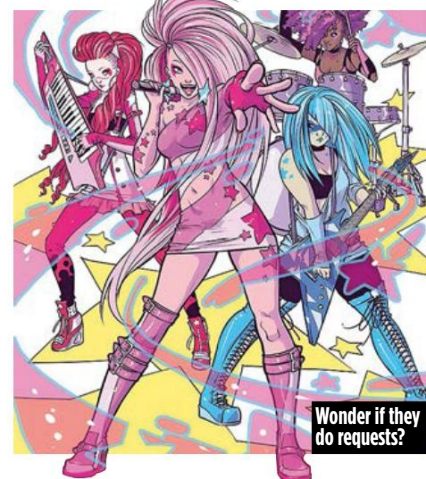
The all-girl rockers hit the comic road

● DEVISED BY TV AND COMICS writer Christy Marx, Hasbro's *Jem And The Holograms* was before its time when the animated series and accompanying toy line first debuted in 1985. Now ahead of a new film later this year, the enigmatic front-woman and her band are set to star in their first ever US comic series courtesy of IDW.

"Jem really stood out back then for being all about female characters in a way that most other shows were not," says writer Kelly Thompson, who will be teaming up with artist Ross Campbell. "But while there was obviously an appeal to female fans, there was also a high action-adventure and sci-fi element to the show, which appealed to both girls and boys."

But while the '80s synth sounds that the Holograms originally specialised in are now more popular than ever, Thompson insists that the book won't have a nostalgic appeal. "We're essentially taking the classic Jem stories and updating them to the 21st century, so as to explore concepts such as music, media and celebrity in a 2015 context," she says. "Part of what made Jem so great back then was that it felt so modern, timely and forward-thinking. So while it would be fun to have some stories that continued that original stuff, it goes against the very idea of Jem to keep it rooted in the past." **SFX**

*Jem And The Holograms* is out in March.



Wonder if they do requests?





**SCI-FACT!**  
Max Landis has written a 436-page, gritty *Super Mario* script which you can read at [maxlandiswrites.com](http://maxlandiswrites.com).

# SPOTLIGHT

Max Landis breathes new life into Mary Shelley's Monster in **Victor Frankenstein**



*Victor Frankenstein* will be the 5,325th time the story has been brought to the screen. Approximately.

## FRANK TALK

For a cinematic legend, Mary Shelley's cross-stitched corpse has had a rougher ride than Neil Patrick Harris in *Gone Girl* (did you see *I, Frankenstein*? No wonder it's so angry). The monster is very much a secondary concern in the Max Landis-scripted *Victor Frankenstein*, although you'll probably still spend half the movie explaining to your gran that it's the doctor who's called Frankenstein.

## FRIENDS FOREVER

With the monster likely to stay on the slab it clears the stage for the relationship between the dashing young Victor Frankenstein and his new favourite lab technician Igor, from whose swivel-free eyes we see the creative sparks begin to fly. More reimagining than resurrection, this will be low on horror chills and big on high-voltage steampunk setpieces.

## THE DOCTOR WILL SEE YOU NOW

You can expect the dishy doctor himself to be taken straight from the classic blueprint: obsessed, tortured and

romantic, which is why James McAvoy is a safe choice. "The film's about obsession and the relentless pursuit of scientific advancement, immortality, trying to replace God... But it's much more about the relationship [between Igor and Frankenstein] than it is about a mental doctor and existential ponderings," said McAvoy.

## I-GOR

It's Igor who gets the big retcon. Here he's a little less Marty Feldman from *Young Frankenstein* and a whole lot more Daniel Radcliffe, sporting a floppy greasy hairdon't. It's Igor that's been effectively brought back to life: the good doc rescues him from his grim fate – a secret medical genius enslaved at the circus – with the pair becoming pals as they collaborate on their Promethean pursuits. "The film becomes about at what point do you have to step out from the shadows of the person that created you and go, 'I am my own person?' Or, do you forever defer to the person that is responsible for your life?" said Radcliffe.



Daniel Radcliffe is playing a smarter Igor than we've been used to.

## STIFF OPPOSITION

The boys' electric dabbling in dead matter brings them to the attention of the poshest sod in medical school. Played by Freddie Fox, Finnegan ropes in Victor and Igor to help build him a monster of his own, aided by his creepy German engineer Dettweiler: it's these devious souls who enable our heroes to go man-building, exploding the gaping moral fissure between Frankenstein and his BFF.

## HIGH-FLYING LOVE

You'd expect the rich dish Victor to be the romantic lead here. Instead, it's Igor – straightened, shaved and swished under the eye of the debonair doctor – who gets to follow a real heart: the one belonging to Lorelei, the damaged circus acrobat who Igor pines for, played by *Downton*'s Jessica Brown Findlay.

## HOLMES IS WHERE THE HEARTS ARE...

All that digging up fresh corpses is bound to waft our misguided mavericks under the nose of the law: the nostrils in question belonging to Andrew Scott as Inspector Roderick Turpin. In fact *Victor Frankenstein* turns out to be a regular *Sherlock* reunion, with Mark Gatiss – obviously playing Dettweiler – and Louise Brealey also taking roles, not to forget regular series one and two director Paul McGuigan at the helm. The game is a foot. And an arm. And a spleen.

## WHEN TO EXPECT IT?

"It's alive!" on 2 October 2015. **SFX**

© MCPX/REX (2)



## HOWARD THE DUCK

# Quacking Up

Sex Criminals' Chip Zdarsky takes on Howard the Duck

**W**HILE HE ISN'T heading for the big screen any time soon after his post-credits cameo in the *Guardians Of The Galaxy*, Howard the Duck is returning in a new comic next month. Written by *Sex Criminals* artist Chip Zdarsky and drawn by Joe Quinones, the dimension-hopping mallard is more relatable than any member of Earth's Mightiest Heroes.

"He's an everyman, or should I say every-duck," says Zdarsky. "Howard's out of place as a duck in a human world, but he's still more of a human than Captain America, y'know? You'd go for a beer with Howard but with Cap, you'd maybe go for a jog."

Created by the late Steve Gerber and Val Mayerick in 1973, *Howard The Duck's* social satire was very much of its turbulent time. "I love the classic run but if any of that is referred to, it'll be in such a way as to not alienate new readers," reasons Zdarsky. "I haven't really had to update anything but there's an instinct on my part to try and focus on Gerber's issues and desires for the character, so a lot of what he introduced and pushed for

will be things I maintain as well. Also, Howard will be really into dubstep."

However, Zdarsky refuses to confirm whether Howard's sometime-girlfriend Beverly Switzler is still a part of his life. "Beverly's a bit of a mystery at the beginning as clearly something has happened between her and Howard," teases Zdarsky. As for the *Guardians of the Galaxy*, they'll show up in issue two, which will explain how Howard fell into the hands of The Collector. "Howard is firmly in the Marvel universe and that big ol' universe includes the *Guardians*, for sure! Half the fun of writing a Marvel book is utilising the Marvel characters. So I'm basically putting in as many characters into the book as Marvel will allow until they legally have to deem it an event book and pay me accordingly!"

The one thing that Zdarsky is promising is plenty of laughs. "It's got to be funny!" he says. "That's my number one goal! Comics need more funny in them so you may as well use that talking duck character for it!" **SFX**

*Howard the Duck's new series starts later this month.*

**SCI-FACT!**  
Nicholas Courtney sported a false moustache for the majority of his time as the Brig on TV.



Note what Howard has in his plant pot...

## THE FORGOTTEN SON

# Hello, Soldier

Lethbridge-Stewart returns in new novels

● LAST SEEN HEROICALLY SACRIFICING HIMSELF AS the Cyber-Brig in "Death In Heaven", Alistair Lethbridge-Stewart's early days are about to be explored in a new series of novels from Candy Jar Books. Licensed from the literary estate of original creator Mervyn Haisman and his writing partner Henry Lincoln, the books take place between the then-Lieutenant Colonel's first encounter with Patrick Troughton's Second Doctor in 1968's "The Web Of Fear" and their next meeting in "The Invasion".

"That was an obvious decision as it meant that we had a gap of about four years to initially play with," says range editor Andy Frankham-Allen, who is also writing first volume *The Forgotten Son* before passing the baton onto

Lance Parkin, David McIntee and Nick Walters. "It's a period of the Brig's life that has never really been touched on in *Who* media, so it is in part an origin story in that we get to look at the man before he became a legend and what turned him into the character that became such a mainstay and an important part of the Doctor's life."

While licensing issues mean that the Doctor is conspicuous by his absence, *The Forgotten Son* pits Lethbridge-Stewart against another of Haisman and Lincoln's creations in the shape of the Abominable Snowman. "The Yeti are in it, which in itself suggests the return of another old enemy..." teases Frankham-Allen. "It's a very personal story for the Brig. It's very much about the private man he keeps separate from the military man he's most known for. It's set a week or so after 'The Web Of Fear' and brings back a few characters from that story, which has a huge impact on the first novel. It also sets up the series as a whole and there's a link to the current series, which you'll either get or you won't." **SFX**

*Lethbridge-Stewart: The Forgotten Son is published on Sunday 22 February.*





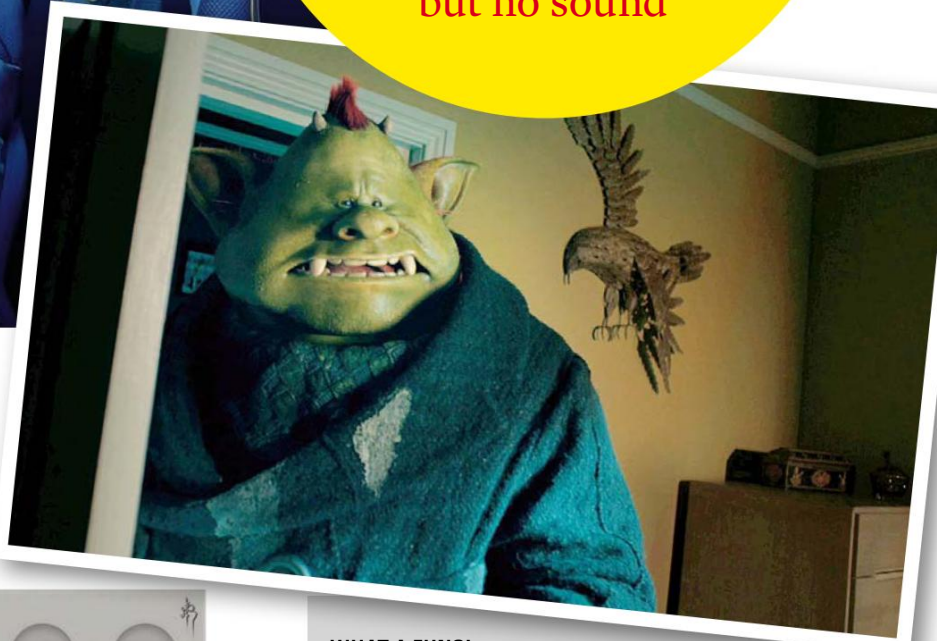


## TRACY ELEMENTS

**1** ITV has given us a first glimpse of the new-look Tracy brothers and... well we're sure we'll grow to love them. *Thunderbirds Are Go!* is set to feature a mix of CG characters (created by Middle-earth maestros Weta) and live action sets when it airs in April. *Game Of Thrones'* Thomas Brodie-Sangster will voice John Tracy, Oscar-nominated *Gone Girl* star Rosamund Pike will play Lady Penelope and David Graham, the original voice of Parker, is reprising his role in the new series.

# IMAGE BANK

Plenty of sights,  
but no sound



## DOCTOR SWHOUS

**2** What would happen if Dr Seuss adapted *Doctor Who*? It would be quite the coup! And probably look a little something like this. The Doctor's Who is by DrFaustusAU, an Australian artist who gives the Time Lords a Seussian twist. If only the good Dr was around to make this benefit to humanity a reality. Seeking out DrFaustusAU on DeviantArt would be very smart!

## DOCTOR WHO



## WHAT A FUNGI

**3** Sky 1 is adapting Raymond Briggs' cherished children's story *Fungus The Bogeyman* for the small screen as a four-part series, set to air at Christmas. The show will be produced by Andy Serkis's Imaginarium Studios in partnership with British effects house Double Negative, who will use live-action and animated elements to bring the tale of smelly, surface-dweller-scaring Bogeyman Fungus, and his son Mould, to life. *Fungus The Bogeyman* was previously adapted for TV by the BBC in 2004 and starred Martin Clunes.



THE CHIMES

# One Song

Kiwi author's debut connects music and books



● AFTER ANNA SMAILL QUIT HER UNIVERSITY violin course in its second year, music's loss became literature's gain. Set in a devastated London where the authoritarian Order keeps the inhabitants subdued by constantly wiping their memories with vast musical instrument the Carillon, *The Chimes* explores a future where people communicate with songs instead of speech.

"One of the tensions for me as a musician was that my expressive goals always overshot my technical ability," she tells Red Alert. "I felt betrayed by this, especially as I loved music intensely. On the other hand, books and reading were far more congenial and instinctive, and they offered a far easier means of expression."

Currently based in Wellington after several years in the UK, Smail believes that London is the perfect location for post-apocalyptic fiction. "There are moments when the city's history just reaches out and touches you," Smail says. "I used to feel it like a sudden drop in temperature, a cold hand on your back. It's like it's already being forgotten; it's already a city of the future in which you stumble across reminders of an historical past."

With lead character Simon realising that he will play a crucial role in bringing down the Order as he gradually remembers his childhood, Smail wanted to contrast more personal catastrophes with archetypal visions of mass apocalypses. "When I stopped playing the violin, it was like an imaginative rupture for me," she says. "My identity was very tied up in playing and I felt like I had to rewrite the story I was telling about myself. Looking back, I can see that I was really quite afraid of the idea of forgetting things, and was mildly obsessed with the pursuit of writing and retaining a personal narrative. All of those ideas have found their way into *The Chimes*."

*The Chimes* is published by Sceptre on 12 February.

## NEWS WARP

ALL FACT, NO FILLER



► **TORCHWOOD** will return as a series of radio plays according to star John Barrowman.

► It's been a sad month for sci-fi greats:

**AVENGERS** creator Brian Clemens died at the age of 83, *The Time Machine* star **ROD TAYLOR** died at 84 and Robby the Robot designer **ROBERT KINOSHITA** died at 100. Their work will live on.

► CW Seed, The CW's digital-only studio, is making new animated web-series **VIXEN**. The show will feature the DC comics character and be set in the *Arrow/Flash* TV universe.

► Speaking of The CW, the network may be planning to launch another **ARROW** spin-off show starring Brandon Routh's Atom, but are only in "very early talks on a very general idea".

► Classic dungeon crawler **BALDUR'S GATE** is getting a new sequel set between *Baldur's Gate 1* and 2. It will be created using the Infinity Engine to feel like the originals.

► **X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST** - *The Rogue Cut* is set to debut on DVD and Blu-ray in Summer 2015. The extended edition will reinstate a significant Rogue subplot with ADR and effects work currently underway.

"I messed up plenty with the third *Spider-Man*, so people hated me for years — they still hate me for it"

After *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* all is forgiven Sam Raimi.

DON'T QUOTE ME

**SCI-FACT!**  
George Lucas recently revealed his original story ideas for *Episode VII* were rejected by Disney.

# STAR WATCH

THAT voice from *The Force Awakens* speaks!

**W**E STILL DON'T KNOW WHO all the cast are playing in *The Force Awakens*, and apparently we don't even know the identities of all the actors yet. It's rumoured that Iko Uwais, Yayan Ruyhian and Cecep Arif Rahman — stars of top Indonesian actioner *The Raid* — have all got roles in the movie. Skilled martial artists have history in *Star Wars* after Ray Park's memorable outing as Darth Maul in *The Phantom Menace*, so this is one piece of speculation we really hope is true.

Having already revealed it was his voice growling over the already legendary 88 seconds of *Episode VII* trailer, Andy Serkis has divulged a few more tidbits to *Entertainment Weekly*. Turns out he's using the voice of his (still unnamed) character in the movie, and that Ol' Raspy has "been through some stuff". The Gollum/Caesar star refused to reveal, however, whether his character is live-action or performance capture, while describing the *Force Awakens* moniker as "very pertinent".

In another part of the *Star Wars* galaxy, Mark "Luke Skywalker" Hamill told Yahoo Movies that *The Force Awakens* "is about the new generation of characters; I think that's the most important thing. It's the opening act of a whole new approach to the storytelling. When George Lucas said that they wanted to do more, I rightly assumed that it wouldn't be our story, because we had a beginning, a middle and an end. This must be our offspring and the current generation, with us there lending the kind of support that Peter Cushing and Alec Guinness did in the original."

Finally, there's change afoot in the camp for the first standalone *Star Wars* movie, directed by *Godzilla*'s Gareth Edwards and due for release in December 2016. Screenwriter Gary Whitta (of *After Earth* and, a long time ago, *SFX* fame) has left the movie, with no replacement announced. "Gary has been a wonderful, inspired contributor and I enjoyed working with him tremendously," said Edwards, delivering the usual platitudes. "I'm so grateful for all of his contributions." **SFX**







# NICK SETCHFIELD'S DEVELOPMENT HELL

Your monthly glimpse into Hollywood's hoped-for future

## AVATARDY! AVATAR 2

Bad news, planet-hoppers. The next Earth shuttle to Pandora has been delayed. You'll just have to amuse yourselves in the departure lounge. Tech-bullying visionary **James Cameron** says that the first in his trilogy of *Avatar* sequels has been bumped from December 2016 to December 2017. What gives, Jim? "There's a layer of complexity in getting the story to work as a saga across three films that you don't get when you're making a standalone film," says Cameron, who plans to shoot all three films at once, the maniac. "We've done

that so that everything tracks throughout the three films. We're not just going to do one and then make up another one and another one after that. And parallel with that, we're doing all the design. So we've designed all the creatures and the environments." A December 2017 release potentially puts Cameron Na'vi dagger-to-lightsaber with **Rian Johnson's** *Star Wars Episode VIII*...

## KEEP IT CIVIL! CAPTAIN AMERICA 3

"I have a brand new costume; I'm in full effect," says **Anthony Mackie**, poised to reprise his role

as Captain America's faithful wingman the Falcon in the shield-slinger's third solo adventure. "I will tell you this: *Cap 3* is gonna be everything you can imagine. *Cap 2* was really *Avengers 1.5* and *Cap 3* is gonna be *Avengers 3.8*." He'll show you his workings later. With **Scarlett Johansson** signed to return as Black Widow, *Civil War* will pitch Cap against Iron Man in a knock-down squabble over superhero rights (can't they just go on *Question Time* like everyone else?). Co-writer **Stephen McFeely** tells IGN the movie needs to tweak the 2006 comic books it's based on.

"The MCU didn't exist [then]. There isn't a **Robert Downey Jr** or **Chris Evans** who has helped create the character, so we need to make sure that that template gets adjusted, in order to make sure it services these characters and not just rip off their parts and make them look like them."

## ASTRAL CINEMA! DOCTOR STRANGE

Who's this we find floating in the lotus position through the astral plane? He looks a little pale. And, frankly, a tad insubstantial. Why, it's a non-corporeal projection of **Benedict Cumberbatch** himself,



## THE ENGINES CANNAE TAKE IT! STAR TREK 3

► There's a new captain in the chair. And he has a taste for speed. *Fast & Furious* helmer **Justin Lin** is the man who'll direct the next *Star Trek* movie, replacing **Roberto Orci**, lost in an unfortunate accident involving delta ray radiation last December (though he remains onboard as producer, flashing one light for yes, two for no). Best known for steering no less than four entries in the hyper-adrenalised car franchise, Lin made his name directing episodes of geek-pleasing TV sitcom *Community*. Paramount are clearly banking that he'll bring the same cash-hoovering, pan-global appeal of the *Fast & Furious* brand to the *Trek* universe. In a Trekker-friendly twist the screenplay's set to be co-written by **Simon Pegg**, Scotty himself, collaborating with Doug Jung, screenwriter of 2003's Dustin Hoffman-starring conman caper *Confidence*. *Star Trek 3* is scrambling to warp speed to hit an 8 July 2016 release.

clearly deep in prep for his role as Marvel's master of the mystic arts. "It's very different," he tells us, via the sorcerous medium of the *Wall Street Journal*. "It's an astral plane." Yes, we know. "There's a huge new element to this Marvel universe that's going to be employed in building this story and this character... It's quite a way off but I'm very excited about that spiritual dimension, obviously. It's something that's been a huge part of my life." As we leave Benedict to drift in a higher state of beinghood we can tell you that **Morgan Freeman**, **Bill Nighy** and **Ken Watanabe** are the frontrunners for the role of the Ancient One, Strange's all-knowing, distinctly pensionable Tibetan mentor. *Doctor Strange* materialises 4 November 2016.

## SHELL-SHOCK! GHOST IN THE SHELL

► **Scarlett Johansson** continues her campaign to be crowned supreme empress of fantasy cinema (oi, budge over, Saldana!). She's just signed on for this live-action Hollywood take on the phenomenally popular Japanese manga, previously brought to the screen in anime form in 1995. Created by **Masamune Shirow**, the cyberpunk saga tells the adventures of Public Security Section 9, an elite covert ops unit who specialise in fighting technology-related crime. Johansson will play cyborg heroine Major Motoko Kusanagi, whose cyberbrain is housed in a full body prosthesis. Nice. *Snow White And The Huntsman* helmer Rupert Sanders will direct for DreamWorks, who acquired the screen rights back in 2008. Yes, that's the telltale sulphurous scent of Development Hell in your

nostrils... *Ghost In The Shell* hits cinemas 14 April 2017.

## NEVERMORE! POE MUST DIE

► No, not to be confused with 1991's Robbie Coltrane laugh-vacuum *The Pope Must Die*. This one's an adaptation of a novel by Marc Olden that takes pioneering mystery scribe Edgar Allan Poe and reimagines him as a heroic battler of demons (next century Hollywood will inevitably bring us *Stephen King - Zombie Slayer* in glorious 5D holo-suppository). Set in New York in the 1840s, Olden's tale finds a broken, alcoholic Poe teaming up with a bare-knuckle fighter to foil a devil-worshipper seeking a fabled throne that'll grant him immortality. It's being prepped for the screen by none other than *Luther* star **Idris Elba** for his Green Door production company.

## GENERATION GAP! X-MEN: APOCALYPSE

► Don't look for X-veterans **Patrick Stewart** and **Ian McKellen** in the next instalment of the mutant franchise. 2016's *Apocalypse* seems set to return the spotlight to the younger cast who debuted in *First Class*. "It's going to be looking very much at the earlier lives of all of our characters," says Stewart of the '80s-set sequel. "And so I don't think we'll be making an appearance." Mind you, **Hugh Jackman**'s already polishing his claws. "I have been speaking to the guys," he tells MTV. "There are some very exciting things about integrating the whole X-Men world, including the Wolverine movie." *Mud*'s **Tye Sheridan** will star as a young Cyclops while *Game Of Thrones*' **Sophie Turner** is our new Jean Grey. Aaliyah: *The Princess Of R&B* star **Alexandra Shipp** is teen Storm.

## ALSO BURNING



**EMILY BLUNT** joining *Snow White And The Huntsman 2*... **MICHAEL KEATON** orbiting *Kong: Skull Island* at Legendary Pictures... **TOM HARDY** out of *Suicide Squad* (did he see last month's Dev Hell illo, by any chance?)... **Eagle Eye**'s **DJ CARUSO** potentially helming *GI Joe 3*... **FRANK BYERS** directing remake of Jean-Luc Godard's *Alphaville*... **TJ MILLER** and **ED SKREIN** in talks to join *Deadpool* cast... Twentieth Century Fox bringing remake of *Escape From New York* to the screen... *Shrek*'s **ANDREW ADAMSON** directing *Inherit The Earth* for Sony, adapting *Zombies Vs Robots* comic series... *The Purge 3* arriving 1 July 2016... **ALEC BALDWIN** joining shrinkage-based satire *Downsizing*... **WES BENTLEY** onboard for *Pete's Dragon* remake... **ELLE FANNING** in talks for **NICOLAS WINDING REFN**'s female-fronted horror *The Neon Demon*... *X-Men* spin-off *Gambit* arriving 7 October 2016... Latest draft of the *He-Man And The Masters Of The Universe* screenplay complete... **ROBERT RODRIGUEZ** directing live-action remake of **RALPH BAKSHI**'s *Fire And Ice*... **ALEX GARLAND** talking 28 *Months Later* with **DANNY BOYLE**... Twentieth Century Fox adapting **BRANDON SANDERSON**'s YA series *The Reckoners*... **MATILDA LUTZ** set to star in *The Ring* reboot *Rings*... **JANE GOLDMAN** writing the *Fables* movie... **ROONEY MARA** and **TATIANA MASLANY** orbiting **GARETH EDWARDS**' *Star Wars* spin-off... *World War Z 2* eyeing October shoot...

# NEXT MONTH # 259

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## AVENGERS: AGE OF ULTRON

Marvel's mightiest return to the screen!

## JONATHAN STRANGE & MR NORRELL

Could it be magic? The BBC's sorcerous new saga is incoming!

## ARROW

SFX catches up with star Stephen Amell!

**PLUS:** *Outlander!* *Batman: Arkham Knight!* *Brian Clemens tribute!* *Tataui!* *Secret Wars!* *DC Comics' Convergence!*

● All contents subject to change. And that concludes our Project Genesis presentation. Yes, we're using unstable proto-matter. So sue us. Go to [gamesradar.com/sfx](http://gamesradar.com/sfx) for details.

## SUBSCRIBE NOW

Never miss an issue – see page 34



# Gathering MOSS

David Langford has bad news for fellow writers



► SF writer David Langford has had a column in *SFX* since issue one.  
 ► David has received 29 Hugo Awards throughout his career.  
 ► His celebrated SF newsletter can be found at <http://news.ansible.co.uk>.  
 ► He is a principal editor of the *SF Encyclopedia* at <http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com>.

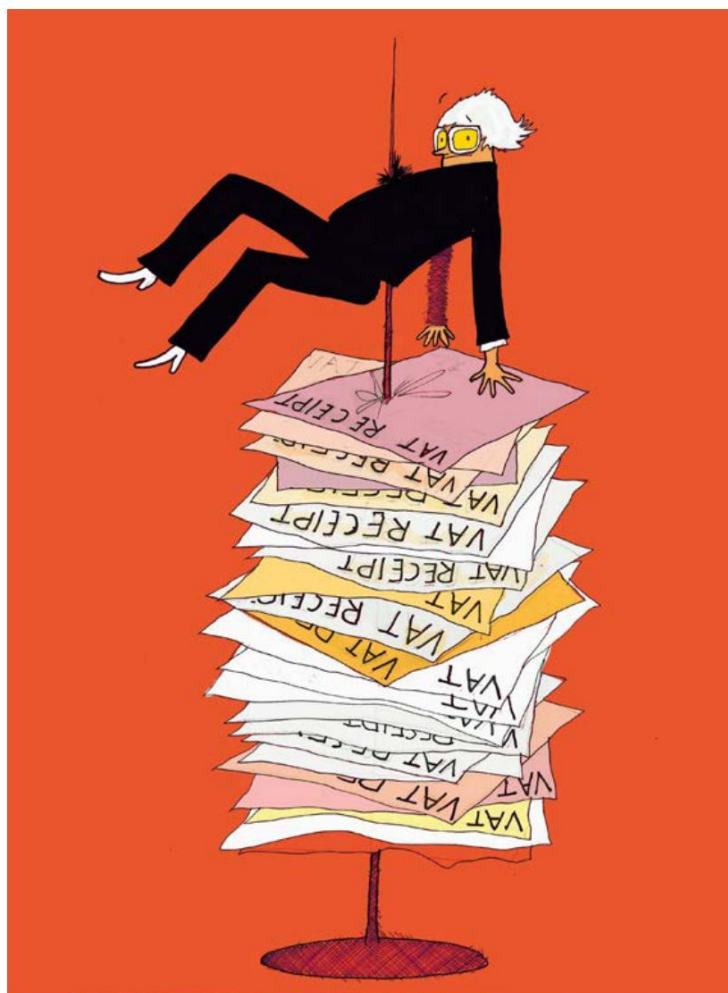
**R**emember my *SFX* 239 column on the joys of creating your own ebooks?

Flogging these was a soothing microbusiness, without the hassle of wrapping and posting POD books. Money arrived via PayPal (for example) and books went out as email attachments or website downloads. Sales mightn't be huge, but there was the quiet satisfaction of getting 100% of the profit – rather than the miserable 25% that so many large publishers have decided is a generous maximum.

This simple way of life ended on 1 January. The problem was Amazon – not directly, but because EU governments hated Amazon's ploy of selling from places like Luxembourg where VAT is low, giving them an edge over registered UK sellers who must charge VAT at 20%. UK microbusinesses weren't bothered because you didn't need to register for VAT until your annual turnover went past £81,000.

Under the new rules, Amazon must now charge VAT at the applicable rate in the *customer's* country. As noted, that's 20% here. It's a huge hassle to keep track of VAT rates in dozens of EU jurisdictions, but Amazon's accountants have to deal with it. Unfortunately, so now do tens or hundreds of thousands of one-person microbusinesses selling digital products like SF/fantasy ebooks, Clanger knitting patterns, Klingon recipes, and so on. The horrible surprise was that although the standard UK VAT threshold stays at £81,000, the special new threshold for EU sales of such digital "services" is... zero.

Right. By selling a single 99p ebook online to a non-UK EU buyer, you're automatically plunged into the nightmare of VAT. You need to sign up at the UK MOSS site (Mini One Stop Shop; how cuddly it sounds), apply VAT at the proper rate for each customer's country, and start submitting VAT returns four times a year. It gets worse. You



need two confirmations of where each customer lives – the "verified address" provided by PayPal (that example again) may not be enough. You must keep these customer location records for ten years, with tiresome bureaucratic safeguards that dump you into Data Protection Act hell.

It's hardly surprising that after researching the thrills and pitfalls of e-trading under the new "VATMOSS" regime, many SF/fantasy ebook publishers have decided that the best way to deal with the whole ghastly VATMESS is to go out of business. Accountants and lawyers agree this is probably the safest plan.

Alternatives? You can revert to the Dark Ages and make the post office happy by mailing ebooks on CD or floppy disk – because in this Alice-in-

## Many SF ebook publishers have decided to go out of business

Wonderland regulatory world, the identical ebook attracts VAT if it's a website download, but not (unless you're VAT-registered for other reasons) if it's sent by snailmail. You can carry on as before and hope no one notices – but remember the VAT authorities (HM Customs and Revenue) can inflict truly terrifying fines. How about refusing to sell ebooks to non-UK EU customers? HMRC doesn't object but warns that expensive EU anti-discrimination lawsuits could follow. Lastly, you can sign up with a big distributor that takes

a huge share of your revenue, such as Amazon, and savour the irony of an anti-Amazon regulation that swells the profits of Amazon.

Frustrated by HMRC advice ranging from unhelpful to contradictory, SF authors and publishers took the lead in pushing back. A Change.org petition to Vince Cable MP, Secretary of State for Business Innovation and Skills, quickly reached 10,000 signatures and brought the useless response "Don't worry, most people won't be affected." Perhaps he meant "most MPs".

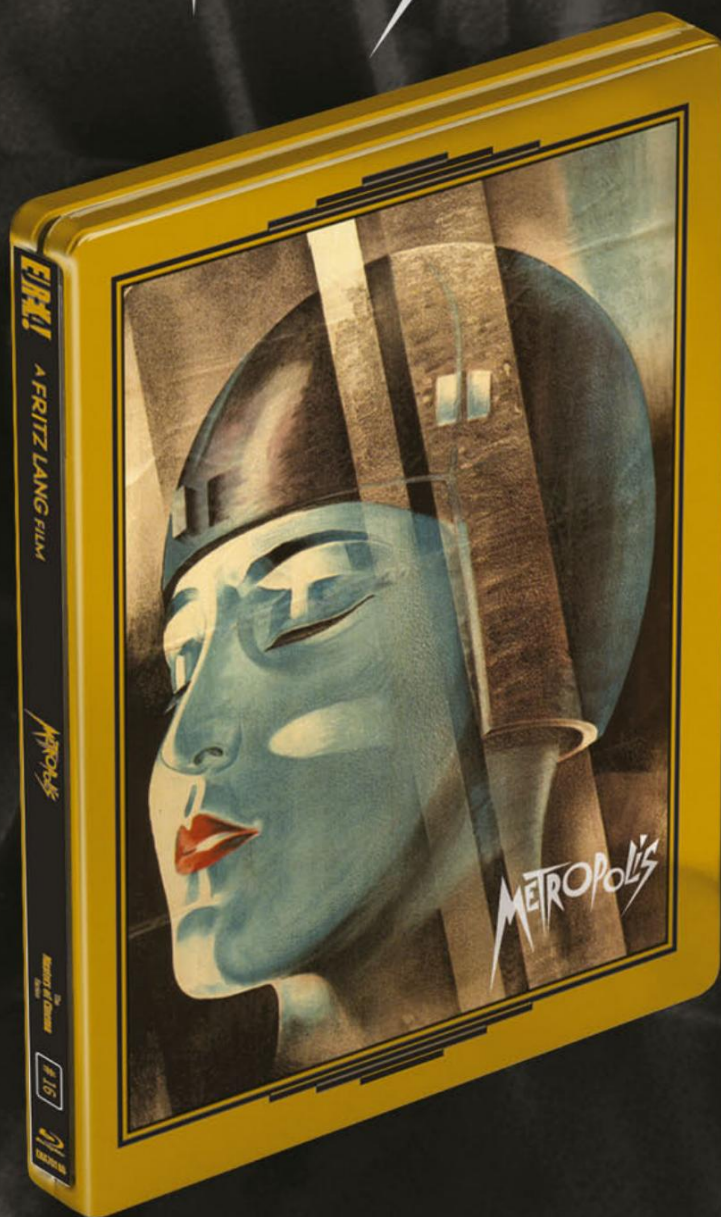
Check for breaking news at [digitalmicrobusinessactiongroup.wordpress.com](http://digitalmicrobusinessactiongroup.wordpress.com). **SFX**

**David Langford, if transmitted digitally to Hungary, is subject to VAT at 27%.**



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# Ideal Holmes

Bonnie Burton quite likes Benedict Cumberbatch...

Celebrity is the kind of phenomenon that can change a marginally successful

character actor into a demigod in just a few years. Such is the case with actor Benedict Cumberbatch, who is so popular that the blog site Tumblr included him in its User Guidelines: "Don't impersonate anyone. While you're free to ridicule, parody, or marvel at the alien beauty of Benedict Cumberbatch, you can't pretend to actually be Benedict Cumberbatch."

Cumberbatch earned his theatre cred in dozens of roles in plays since 2001, as well as TV work like *Heartbeat*, *Silent Witness* and *Hawking*, playing Stephen Hawking himself. He also appeared in films like *Atonement*, *The Other Boleyn Girl* and *War Horse*, collecting acting awards like a man with unlimited mantel space.

But it was his stellar performance as Sherlock Holmes in the BBC's *Sherlock* in 2010 that truly catapulted the actor into the upper stratosphere of fame. People around the world were wondering where this guy with the name like a Charles Dickens character came from. Legions of fans began to line up with signs and hopes for selfies with the actor everywhere he went.

Blogs by the thousand dedicated to him popped up overnight and social media was all a-buzz of his every move. His fans were known en masse as Cumberbitches and then the Cumbercollective, as the actor thought bitches was derogatory.

This is where I come in. I'm one of those Cumberbitches. I have a blog dedicated to Cumberbatch holding photoshopped cats. No really, I do. It's at [BenedictCatbatch.tumblr.com](http://BenedictCatbatch.tumblr.com). I've written *Sherlock* fan fiction. I own the Benedict Cumberbatch colouring book. I own every audio book and radio production he's lent his voice to. My Pinterest board looks like grounds for a restraining order. When his name pops up



on my Google News Alert about his latest movies like *The Imitation Game* or *Doctor Strange*, I'm the first one to pitch my editor at CNET.com an article. I even begged my lovely *SFX* editor here to let me dedicate at least one column completely to the Batch.

So yeah, I'm a fan. Cumberbatch is the closest thing my generation has to a Beatle or Elvis. He ranks right up there with Hollywood royalty like James Dean or Cary Grant. He's an actor's actor. He's not in movies, TV, radio and theatre because he wants to be famous. He's doing it because he loves acting, and it shows.

Any actor who throws himself into a role without turning into a real-life jerk gets my respect. Cumberbatch always takes time out for

creative, talented and dedicated fans who make being part of the Cumbercollective like a family.

We happily worship Cumberbatch in a way that makes it fun to gush over a celebrity without having to be embarrassed. If we want to make puppets that look like his various acting roles, who cares? So what if I have written fan fiction of him as Darth Vader's long lost brother? The Church of Cumberbatch is open all the time, and none who enter ever feels ashamed for being a goofy fan. I'm already working on my Cumberbatch as Doctor Strange fan art of him holding a cat. **SFX**

**And yes, Bonnie does indeed own a pillow with Benedict's face on it.**



Our columnist Bonnie Burton, a San Francisco-based author, has written a number of books including her latest - *The Star Wars Craft Book*.  
Bonnie appears on the massive "Geek & Sundry" and "Stan Lee's World Of Heroes" YouTube channels.  
More of her writing can be found at [www.grrl.com](http://www.grrl.com).

## Cumberbatch is up there with James Dean or Cary Grant

the hordes of fans who stand outside in bad weather or stay up all night in line just for a glimpse of him. He takes selfies with fans and gives them his autograph all with a smile.

The best part of being a Cumberbatch isn't that one day I will eventually get to shake his hand and say thanks. It's the friends I've made from our one common interest. I've bonded with so many fans through social media and waiting in lines at his appearances. These aren't creepy stalkers who make secret bubblegum shrines to him in their closets. They are



This could be you! (But you'll have to buy the threads yourself.)

# WIN!

## A SWORD-FORGING EXPERIENCE WITH **GAME OF THRONES** S4!

**N**OT ONLY THE MOST SUCCESSFUL show in HBO history (take that, Tony Soprano), *Game Of Thrones* is a bona fide global phenomenon. On 16 February, the epic fantasy series returns to Blu-ray and DVD for its fourth season, bigger and bloodier than ever. While the Lannisters' grip on the Iron Throne remains intact, new threats from the south, north and east threaten to tip the scales. Betrayal, dishonour, murder, war, extra-marital jiggy... it's all here, plus a host of new characters joining the regular gang. Keeping up with who's who in George RR Martin's sprawling universe can be a bit of a job, so it's as well that the Season 4 Blu-ray and DVD is loaded with never-before-seen special features unpacking all that mythology. Plus there's enough behind-the-scenes material to choke a direwolf.

To celebrate the release of *Game Of Thrones: The Complete Fourth Season*, SFX and our sister mag *Total Film* have teamed up with HBO to offer an extra-special prize:

the chance to forge your own sword! One lucky reader will embark on a four-day sword-making workshop at the Forge of Avalon in Glastonbury ([www.forgeofavalon.com](http://www.forgeofavalon.com)). You'll start with the rudiments of sword-making – and before long you'll be owner of your own Knightly Sword in the style of the Late Middle Ages. And what better place to pose heroically with your new blade than in the shadow of Glastonbury Tor?

The winner will need to be over 18 – or if 16-plus, accompanied by a responsible co-participating adult (ie a parent/guardian). If you're travelling far there'll be B&B accommodation on offer, and – this is the really exciting bit – you'll get to keep the finished product. You'll also be entitled to a certificate for the prize that'll be valid through 2015 and subject to the organisers arranging a mutually convenient date for participation. Okay, enough of the housekeeping; for a chance to win, answer the question to the right by visiting:

[www.gamesradar.com/Game-thrones-competition](http://www.gamesradar.com/Game-thrones-competition)



**OUT TO OWN  
FROM 16  
FEBRUARY!**

**Which of these is NOT the name of a *Game Of Thrones* episode?**

- A** The Pointy End
- B** The Bear And The Maiden Fair
- C** Blackwater
- D** The Red Wedding
- E** Myhsa

**TERMS AND CONDITIONS** Tickets are valid through 2015 and subject to the organisers arranging a mutually convenient date for participation. Tickets are non-transferable, not for resale, there is no cash alternative and additional expenses are the responsibility of the prize winner. To enter SFX competitions you can enter online at [www.gamesradar.com](http://www.gamesradar.com) between Wednesday 4 February 2015 and midnight Thursday 12 March 2015. Prize is as stated and cannot be transferred or refunded. No cash alternative will be offered. This competition is only open to people aged 18 or over, or 16-plus if accompanied by a responsible co-participating adult. The winners will be selected at random from all the correct entries received between the relevant dates and winners will be notified within 28 days of the closing date. Free entry, as well as full terms and conditions, are available online at [www.gamesradar.com](http://www.gamesradar.com), but please note that we cannot accept postal entries. Unless otherwise stated, SFX competitions are open to all UK residents of 18 years and over, except employees of: (a) the company; (b) any third party appointed by the Company to organise and/or manage the Competition; and (c) the Competition sponsor(s). By entering this competition, you consent to us using your personal details to send you information about products and services of Future which may be of interest to you. If you do not want to receive this information, please specify while entering online.





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features and reviews in the known universe. To mark the occasion, we're hopping in our DeLorean, revving up to 88mph, and going back to where it all began in 1995 so you can get the magazine for even less than you did when we launched!

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*Rich*

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THIS MONTH'S  
LETTERS  
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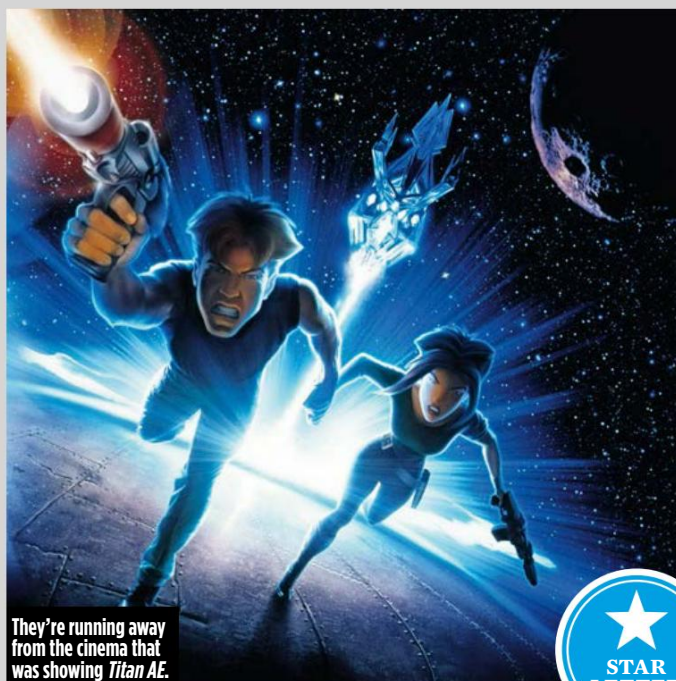
**Nick Setchfield,**  
Features  
Editor

► We wondered what you made of "Last Christmas", Peter Capaldi's first festive spin in the TARDIS. Was it a shiny new bike or mouldy satsuma? As ever you let us know, filling the SFX mailbox with a mix of hoorahs and humbugs...

## WRITE IN AND WIN!



Hey, star letter writer! Yes, you over there, Dave Barsby – don't look so bashful, friend! Not only are you king inbox-tickler of the month but you also bag these fine books from our chums at Black Library: *Archaon: Everchosen*, the first part of Rob Sander's *Archaon* origin story, plus *Path Of The Dark Eldar*, a three-volume collection of Andy Chambers' *Dark Eldar* novels – complete with three bonus stories also written by Andy. It's the very definition of win-win. Write in to us here at SFX and if we like what you're saying you too can be a win-winner.



They're running away from the cinema that was showing *Titan AE*.

STAR LETTER

## THEY'LL BE BACK

In SFX 256 there was a lot of bemoaning of the *Ghostbusters* remake. But Hollywood has always remade its most popular movies (the Chuck Heston *Ben-Hur* was the third version of that story). It's only come to the fore in the last decade because the '70s was when the concept of a blockbuster first emerged, and people who grew up then became, in the 2000s, the influential Hollywood directors, producers, writers and studio execs who were in a position to stamp their own mark on their beloved childhood favourites. Now we are in the 2010s it's the turn of '80s films and TV shows to be remade by the people who adored them as children. In the 2020s we'll

probably have remakes of *Forrest Gump* and *The Matrix* and a *Pulp Fiction* TV series. People ask "Why don't they leave the classics alone and remake something flawed but with potential?" If you strike gold you keep digging in the same place – there's little financial sense in taking something that didn't work and hoping it will second time round. Personally I hope the flawed-with-potential *Titan AE* will be turned into a gritty *BSG*-style live-action TV show. But which studio would pay out to make a TV series based on a flop movie?

*Dave Barsby, Derby*

**Bang goes my dream of a dark, grounded *Pluto Nash* reboot...**



## HOT TOPIC WHAT DID YOU THINK OF "LAST CHRISTMAS"?

I enjoyed it. The Doctor, Clara and Santa bounced off each other nicely. Nick Frost was great. It made you think about the nature of dreams and reality. Not sure what people are actually expecting from a *Doctor Who* Christmas special (maybe *The Greatest Story Ever Told*?) but this ticked all the boxes for me. And I'm glad Clara is staying.

*Stuart Surridge*

A parasite that DIES if the host wakes up? No wonder there aren't many around...

*John Hobart*

I absolutely LOVED the Christmas special. For me it was one of the Moff's best scripts. It redeemed the rather clumsy exploration of the "grumpy" Doctor we had in the last series, which I feel the Moff was a little too worried about introducing to the world, bashing us over the head with half-hearted explanations of why he was this way in case the audience didn't get it. It also gave us a much better ending for Danny Pink (I thought the last ten minutes of "Death In Heaven" were awful). For me this special has restored the modern series to that special place in my heart. It also made me feel that Capaldi's Doctor has finally arrived – he feels like the Doctor again by the end of the episode.

*Iain Brooks*

I really enjoyed it. I've decided life's too short to get hot under the collar about plot holes and the like in what is basically a television show for the family (and not a high-art cinema verité designed to be intently beard-stroked over by

THIS COULD BE YOU! EMAIL [SFX@FUTURENET.COM](mailto:SFX@FUTURENET.COM)

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## "Life's too short to get hot under the collar about plot holes"

Earth?). A good story has to be believable and that spoiled it for me. I can't decide if Capaldi is a good Doctor as the writing just keeps letting him down. I just don't care about him or Clara. Matt Smith's stories always made me cry. These stories make me angry: they are illogical nonsense.

Zoey Fendt

Making the aliens look like Facehuggers from *Alien* and then making a reference to this in the script does not excuse the laziness of the design team and writers in this instance. *Doctor Who* is usually more unique.

Liam Curry

I think the Christmas Special should have had the subtitle: "In space, no one can hear you dream."

Stephen Saul

serious adults in tweed jackets and polo-necks), so I just had a blast getting immersed in a wonderfully silly, scary, good fun romp. But for those of you who enjoy berating the current writer, have a bit of ammo that occurred to me: if the Dream Crabs supposedly give nice dreams while they slurp your brain, why did six disparate souls end up in a shared dream set on a freezing cold research base being all *Alien*ed? But like I said – life's too short; it was a fine bit of entertainment television.

Steve Jewess

If I wanted to know what films Moffat had watched over the last year I'd have asked.

Alex Jones

They "invented" an alien so much like the alien in *Alien* that they had to refer to the alien in the movie *Alien*! Where is the innovation and imagination? It was a story that made no sense – why would all those people have Dream Crabs? Why would it just so happen that Clara and the Doctor were two of the six people affected on a whole planet (if the Doctor was even on

Great stuff – by far the best Christmas special and enjoyed by all in our household. To all those moaning about it being a rip off of *Alien/The Thing/Inception*, what show have you been watching for the last 50 years? *Doctor Who* has always been a magpie. The '70s Hinchcliffe/Holmes era was built on homaging classic sci-fi and horror movies. As for complaints about the companions taking centre stage, I think Moffat has made the show more "about" the Doctor than it ever has been. The →

## THIS MONTH IN SCI-FI HISTORY

SFX 194  
May 2010



5 YEARS AGO

SFX welcomes Doctor 11 with a – modest cough – absolutely frickin' amazing 3D cover. You can flick that fringe!

SFX 129  
April 2005



10 YEARS AGO

Seemingly inevitable "Who's That Girl?" line dodged as Billie Piper makes it the second new *Who* cover in a row.

SFX 63  
April 2000



15 YEARS AGO

Vic and Bob on the cover of SFX! But old stager *Star Wars* too, trailing 12 pages of unseen photos from *Episode IV*.

## CASH IN THE AT-AT

Your sci-fi memorabilia valued by the experts from auctioneers Vectis



Ashley Beeching sent us pics of his *Star Wars* memorabilia, including "arguably the most sought-after item", this Yak-Face *Star Wars* figure.

Kathy Taylor of Vectis says:

▶ You have a fine example of a Palitoy/Kenner *Star Wars* Yak Face 3 3/4" Action Figure, dating from 1985. He was one of the "last 17" figures produced during the vintage run covering



the first three films, just before the *Star Wars* line was discontinued.

There were 15 new figures produced along with two bonus figures that were blacked out on the rear of the card (Ewoks Paploo and Lumat). He is one of the rarer figures – he was not available for retail in the US, and consequently was produced in smaller quantities than the rest of the line. In Europe Yak Face was provided without a weapon, but in Canada he was complete with a

staff – as in your example. There are two variations of card back – the Palitoy/General Mills European Tri-logo and the Kenner Canadian French/English Power Of The Force (with coin).

### VALUE

Loose £60-80;  
Carded Power Of The Force £1,200-1,500;  
Carded Tri-logo £400-600 (Note that condition plays a great part in valuation, especially when packaged. These prices represent an "average" – expect to pay a premium value for perfection!)

£60-£80

If you've got a piece of memorabilia you'd like us to feature, send us a photo of your item (in focus, well lit against a plain background, and at least 1,000 pixels across) with a few words about what it means to you, to [sfx@futurenet.com](mailto:sfx@futurenet.com), using the subject line Cash In The AT-AT. Ask The SFXperts will return next month.

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## SOAPOX SFX WRITERS' PERSONAL RANTS

### Dave Bradley believes there's a reason for so many sequels and reboots



Nothing wrong with Spidey movies, but spare a quid or two for the indies.

Whenever a reboot or a prequel is announced, there's a predictable outcry from SF fans. Twitter and Facebook light up with shrieks of "Have filmmakers run out of ideas?!" or "Why do we NEED another Terminator movie?!" They're heartfelt and valid criticisms. But here's the truth: it's your fault Hollywood is like this.

This isn't a rant about the merits of individual franchises. I'm here today to simply recommend you put your money where your mouth is. Or more accurately, put your money where you think the film business should put its money.

Did you go to your local cinema to see *Safety Not Guaranteed*, or *What We Do In The Shadows*, or *Her*? Did you buy *SFX* when we put *A Scanner Darkly* on the cover? If the answers to these questions are a baffled "no" then you're the reason there's a *Transformers 4*. Movie studios make what sells. They're businesses. They probably take more risks than you realise, but they've still got to do what their customers seem to want most. Every time you spend your Saturday night re-watching *Iron Man 3* on Blu-ray instead of *Primer* or *Cloud Atlas* you reinforce their behaviour

patterns. Why would they reinvent the wheel if all you ever talk about on Facebook is the huge upcoming DC slate?

There's nothing wrong with that. But if you *are* one of life's complainers, sad about Hollywood always looking inwards and backwards, then please: stop thinking about Hollywood at all. Walk past the billboards advertising the latest fantasy trilogy with your head tucked warmly into your duffle coat, and go straight to your local

### You're the reason there's a *Transformers 4*

arthouse cinema, where you can support clever indie dramas. Buy a magazine when it features a cover image you don't recognise and be sure to support your local film festival. Of course, it's brilliant if you do want to go and see *Avengers 2* at the cinema or spend the January sales scouring for bargainous *Star Trek* DVDs. But then don't go straight onto Twitter and complain about why Disney and Paramount are repeating themselves.



companions were given much more attention during the RTD run on the show. And look back to the '60s – who were the characters we followed as an audience? Ian and Barbara. During those first two series they were effectively the leads, even carrying the show when Hartnell was off. As for plot holes? Well I've yet to come across a *Doctor Who* story that doesn't resemble Swiss cheese when scrutinised. As a piece of TV the most important question for me is "Was I entertained?" And yes I was, greatly. Job done.

Rob Perry

Lots of comparisons to *Alien* and *Inception* but it reminded me a lot of Alan Moore's Superman story "For The Man Who Has Everything"...

Neil Taylor

The obsession with Clara is now becoming grating. I want to watch a show about a Time Lord, an enigmatic alien who saves planets and entire races from oblivion. I really don't want him to play second fiddle

to his companion. I have nothing against Jenna Coleman, but Moffat has written her character as a know-all, smug attention-seeker, who is now the focus of the entire show. Clara is now the single most important character in *Who* history, and Capaldi's Doctor is made to look like a fumbling doofus without Clara there to save the day or be his moral compass. Moffat has made her outstay her welcome, and he's not far off doing the same himself.

Phil Bowers

Good job the dream didn't riff on my DVD list as it did on Shona's – I had '60s *Batman*, *The Herbs*, *Frozen* and early Hitchcock...

Neil Howard

I thought it was okay. Capaldi's Doctor – after feeling a little stiff in the early episodes – seems to be defrosting nicely. Jenna Coleman had some good moments as well. I hope that continues for her into the new season.

James Skinner

This year's *Doctor Who* Christmas Special was great fun. It had a nice creepy element with the contrast of Nick Frost as Saint Nick. The dream within a dream within dream felt familiar, as did the alien who only acts when it is perceived



Resurrection: worth some hugs.





Next issue: Bilbo Baggins made out of tyres.



## "My Gandalf was 300 balloons and took six hours"

(a sort-of reverse Weeping Angel and not too dissimilar to the Silence). But the character moments, the dark isolated setting, and the rug-pull at the end with old Clara, all made it an engaging fun treat for Christmas Day.

Keith Tudor, Romsey, Hants

I have to confess that the prospect of Santa rocking up in *Doctor Who* gave me some low-level collywobbles but "Last Christmas" managed to make this mad idea work – in fact it had some surprisingly touching stuff to say about the power of fictional heroes. Plus: brain-slurping crustaceans. Always a treat after the Queen's Speech.

## INCREDIBLE OMISSION

Okay. He's one of the greatest characters in British science fiction, a brilliant but eccentric and unpredictable scientist whose many adventures – often in the company of his none-too-brilliant but doggedly loyal military

best friend – appeared over decades. Generations of children have grown up thrilling to his adventures. He first appeared on television in the 1960s and then, after a long absence, he was revived in a new big-budget version by the BBC. Despite some trepidations about possible stunt casting and misfiring updating for the 21st century, millions of fans awaited his latest incarnation with bated breath...

...but none of this appeared in the Christmas issue of *SFX*, which had page after page of faff about *Doctor Who* but didn't mention *The Incredible Adventures Of Professor Branestawm* once! Sort it out!

Emily Redston

Sorry, Emily. We were too busy putting the finishing touches to our lavish, collector's item *Professor Branestawm* special. Available now from all good parallel universes.

## BLOW-UP WIZARD

I am a long-time reader and big fan of *Lord Of The Rings*. To show my excitement for the last *Hobbit* film I made a sculpture of Gandalf out of balloons. It was around 300 balloons and took six hours to make.

Tom Kent

Against the power of Mordor

there can be no victory! Because Mordor has pins.

## ALL RISE

Just wanted to offer a (slight) counter-view to the review of *Resurrection* season one in *SFX* 256. I really enjoyed it and at times I thought I was reading about a different show. And to some degree I was – that show being *Les Revenants*. I haven't seen *Les Revenants*, which may be why I am able to enjoy *Resurrection* more than the reviewer. I liked the review overall but wanted to say to other *SFX* readers you should give this show (*Resurrection*) a go!

David Cookson

Let us know if you do watch *Les Revenants*, David – be interesting to see if that changes your view of *Resurrection*.

## MAG OF THE FUTURE

Somewhat troubled by the name of the month on the cover of issue 256. February indeed! I bought this in December! Should be well in the recycle by February! I do realise that the publishing industry has this merry wheeze of putting advanced dates on the cover of their magazines, no doubt to give the title long life on the newsstands, but it does seem to be pushing it a little. Indeed, "This Month In Sci-fi History" proclaimed five years ago to be March! Shock horror – there is time slippage at work even within the magazine. Then, in a bright Christopher Nolan type revelatory moment, it dawned on me what is going on. What if Bath is somewhere near a black hole (Bristol perhaps) and the printers are near the same black hole but further out? If the magazine takes an hour to get between the two then seven Earth years may have passed. With all the proofing that goes on the (now much respected) *SFX* scribes have to guesstimate when the issue will be available in the shops. Frankly February is pretty damn accurate considering all the time variables. Well done one and all.

Andrew Naish

Is that you, Kip Thorne?



## SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS WITH THE SCI-FI WORLD!

Write in and you'll win some books if we feature you in the star letter slot. Email us at [sfx@futurenet.com](mailto:sfx@futurenet.com) or you can try Post Apocalypse, *SFX*, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA if you're not taken with technology.

WAHF

## WE ALSO HEARD FROM

● **Kenny Gibson** (thought "Last Christmas" was "one of the best Chrimbo specials, head and shoulders better than last year's"); ● **Steve Mathewman** ("Great score by Murray Gold"); ● **John Porter** ("Liking the way that the current stewardship of *Who* is not spoonfeeding and allowing the audience to engage brains to gain full enjoyment"); ● **Maryanne Bowes** ("It reminded me of an old *Twilight Zone* script"); ● **Kevin Schooler** ("The visual and auditory equivalent of south-bound leavings from a north-bound pachyderm", apparently – is that an expert zoological opinion?); ● **John Cowdell** ("Nick Frost was totally wasted. I didn't laugh once"); ● **Stephen Saul** ("People who criticise the Moffat era really don't know how good they've got it. He's one of the best writers in the business"); ● **John Gibson-Hill** ("The unique thing about this show is you may not like it now but in years to come you may love it again"); ● **Rob Monfea** ("Noticed one of the elves had 'Wolf' on the back of his jacket, wondered if the other one had 'Bad' written on his?"); ● **Raymond Atkinson** ("The plot was a convoluted mess"); ● **Ian Salisbury** ("Capaldi continues to excel"); ● **Kayla Oakley** ("It was just a mixture of all of Moffat's old plots in one"); ● **Catherine Procter** ("The new generation of fans don't understand that *Doctor Who* is meant to be scary!"); ● **Mick Trezise** ("Magical, mysterious and full of festive fun, along with a couple of jumps for the kids"); ● **Andy Mayhew** ("Perhaps a little too complicated after a day of drinking...") – Andy! No more eggnog!; ● **Peter Lang** (fearing the *Highlander* reboot will arrive with a Miley Cyrus soundtrack); ● **Mark Allen** (thanks for the discs! Very thoughtful of you); ● **Mark and Sas Gambell** (official suppliers to *SFX* of the Teynham Parish Council newsletter – at least when it has Daleks in it...); and many, many more...



# Wishlist

Illustrating what you want to see in new films and TV. **This Month:** Wonder Woman is heading to the big screen

## Wonder Woman

### YOUR TOP 5 REQUESTS

#### Power Up

**1** She could deflect bullets and, er, telepathically communicate with animals, but Lynda Carter's Wonder Woman was lacking some key powers, and you'd like them reinstated. "Don't de-power her! Wonder Woman flies, and she is the female counterpart and (near) equal to Superman," says **Richard Johnson**.

#### Loveless

**2** Flying in the face of Hollywood wisdom, you DON'T want to see Wonder Woman lumbered with a token love interest. "NO romance. In fact I would prefer to avoid most clichés involving a female lead," says **Kirsty Leanne**.

#### Colour

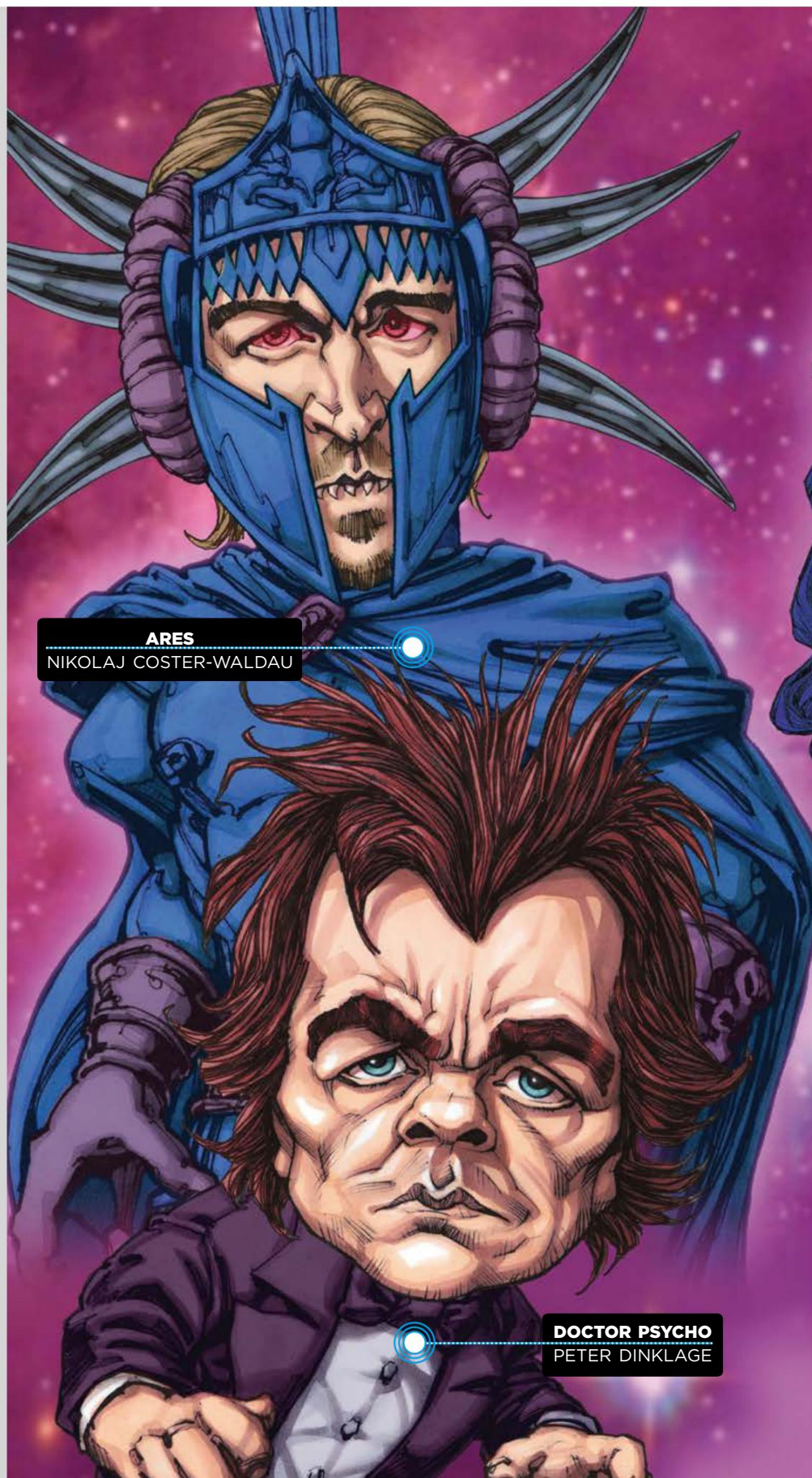
**3** After *Man Of Steel* DC could stand for "dull colours", which is why **Jonathan Harvey** wants to see a splash of primary back in the DCU. "It needs a bright and colourful Wonder Woman to reflect off the dark and brooding Batman/Superman. I'd love to see mythological Themyscira too."

#### Levity

**4** Similarly, you don't want to see Wonder Woman in a Superman-style mope during her first solo outing on the silver screen. "No existential angst, we get enough of that from Supes and Bats. Wonder Woman knows who she is and she's proud of it," says **Tom Gray**.

#### God Of War

**5** Every hero needs a worthy villain and **Chris J Capel** knows who it should be. "Follow the example of the Wonder Woman animated movie and have Ares, the God of War, as the villain, perhaps played by *Game Of Thrones*' Nikolaj Coster-Waldau."



**ARES**  
NIKOLAJ COSTER-WALDAU

**DOCTOR PSYCHO**  
PETER DINKLAGE

ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL GARNER





WONDER WOMAN  
GAL GADOT

HIPPOLYTA  
LYNDA CARTER

CHEETAH  
EMMA STONE

## ARE YOU LISTENING?

Hera, hear our readers

Three-movie story arc with Cheetah in the first movie, whose strings are pulled by Dr Psycho (Peter Dinklage), who is the Big Bad in the second movie whose strings are pulled by Circe, who is the Big Bad in the third movie.

### Carl de Gouveia

I just hope it will be a fun and colourful movie that does her justice. Wonder Woman is an icon and deserves to be treated that way. **Tomas Becks**

Lynda Carter as Hippolyta.

### Matthew Rowan

Wonder Woman looking less like Xena. **Catherine Procter**

A red, blue and gold costume.

### Leslie Anderson

Colour. I would like to see the movie in colour. **Duane Keaton**

No invisible plane, ironically used or otherwise. **David Stephens**

A joke somewhere in the course of the movie. Maybe even two. **Craig Oxbrow**

Wonder Woman to be strong, interesting and layered.

### Emma Ruth Welsby

I would've liked Charisma Carpenter as Wonder Woman.

### Helen Williams

The original theme music, so cheesy! **Paul Downey**

Where's the Wonder Woman costume? Who's this Xena wannabe? **Terry Westmorland**

A different actress.

### James Davis-Mann

Shot with realistic tones, not a horrible bleak wash like *Man Of Steel*. **Liam Curry**

I would like to see Wonder Woman's star-spangled outfit making it to the big screen.

### Gary Pratt

Embrace the comic book roots and don't make it dark or gritty.

### Kevin Hall

I'd like to see it along the lines of *Captain America*. A good retro set-up and a much better costume. Oh, and to actually call it *Wonder Woman*, as DC have an aversion to their own characters' names. **Wayne Smyth**

Brian Azzarello's and Cliff Chiang's Greek pantheon - Ares, Poseidon, Eros, Hera, Athena, Apollo. **John Deckard**

I'd like to see her invisible plane [arf]. **Phillip Blackman**

### coming soon

## The X-Files and Ghost In The Shell

We hope you like the return of sci-fi classics, because *The X-Files* and *Ghost In The Shell* are up next.



Send in your ideas about our current Wishlist by visiting [bit.ly/SFXwishlist](http://bit.ly/SFXwishlist)



# Event Horizon

Because meeting up is every fan's right

**DON'T MISS IT!**

## Profondo Rosso Live Score

21 February, Barbican Hall, London

Claudio Simonetti's Goblin are coming back to the UK to perform their classic soundtracks

**A** CORE MEMBER OF ITALIAN PROG BAND GOBLIN, keyboardist Claudio Simonetti worked with horror director Dario Argento on many soundtracks – most famously operatic shocker *Suspria*. Recently, live-score screenings around Britain treated audiences to the sight of Simonetti recreating the score's weird, guttural “witch” vocals. “I break my throat!” Simonetti laughs. “It’s not easy to be a witch!”

Strepsils won’t be required on the rider when Simonetti’s band return though; this time they’ll be playing along to Argento’s 1975 thriller *Profondo Rosso* (aka *Deep Red*). As his first soundtrack, it holds a special place in the musician’s heart.

“Dario [wanted] a rock sound,” he explains. “He asked the producer, ‘I’d like to call Deep Purple, Pink Floyd, ELP...’ but he said, ‘Before you go there I’d like you to meet these young guys I’m producing’. So we were very lucky.”

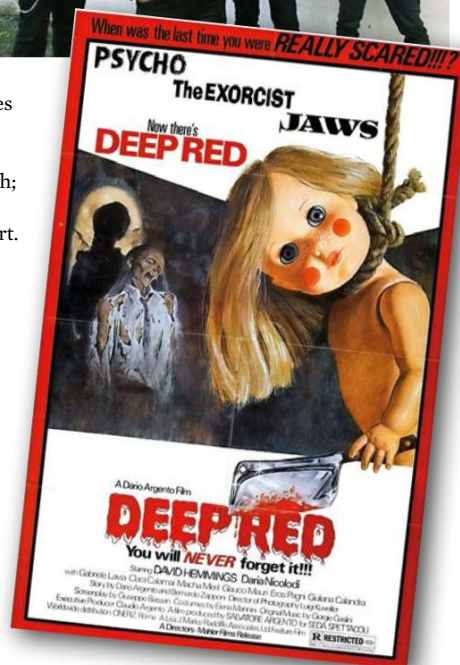
Goblin fans can expect a faithful recreation. But don’t expect exactly the same instrumentation – it’d be tricky to transport...

“I used a real church organ with 15,000 pipes. We recorded the soundtrack in one of the biggest studios in Rome [Ortophonic]. It’s under this big church, so they had the chance to record the organ from the church to the studio. When I learned this I said, ‘Wow, we have to use it!’”

The results were phenomenally successful. “We sold a million albums in 10 months, and were top of the chart for 15 weeks. We couldn’t believe it, cos though we had a lot of prog bands in Italy, it was underground.”

That was four decades ago now, and in the intervening years, Goblin’s renown has grown and grown. “If you’d told me in 1975 that in 40 years it’d be more famous than now I’d have laughed! It’s incredible.”

<http://bit.ly/BarbicanGoblin>



Page. Irish novelist and *Dredd* writer Michael Carroll will also be making a rare UK appearance at the event.

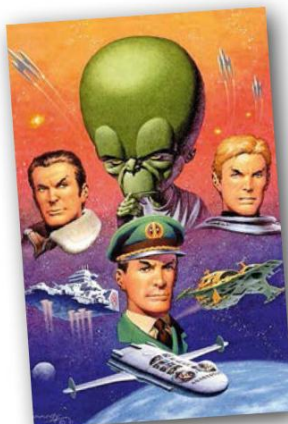
With more than 100 exhibitors scheduled to attend, the diverse range of publications, books, original art and toys, alongside convention exclusives, will ensure that collectors and fans of all ages should find something to take away from the event.

The organisers say they have conducted comprehensive surveys to find out exactly what the public wants and promise some extra special surprises. Things already revealed include a range of panel discussions, interviews with star guests and creators, professional critiques from publishers and editors, as well as competitions and activities. There’s also talk of comic-themed screenings at Birmingham’s arts centre which will include guest speakers, although the full programme is yet to be announced.

It looks like Britain’s second biggest city has its sight set on putting on a good show.

You can find out more at their website, where tickets are already on sale.

<http://www.thecomicrofestival.com/>



**DON'T MISS IT!**

## Birmingham Comics Festival

18 April, Edgbaston Cricket Ground, Birmingham

Steven Ellis looks forward to a new con

**T**HE CONVENTION CIRCUIT IN THE UK is going from strength to strength and there’s a new event hoping to carve its place in the calendars of discerning con goers.

Birmingham’s inaugural Comics Festival is coming our way in April and the early signs are good, with an already strong-looking guest list and more names yet to be announced.

So far there’s comic writer and novelist Jonathan Maberry, cover artist Ryan Brown, Coventry-based artist Al Davison (known for his work on *Doctor Who* and *Hellblazer*), manga artist Sonia Leong, writer Jim Alexander, artist, painter and sculptor Lucio Parillo, cartoonist Lew Stringer and *Commando* veteran Keith

## UPCOMING

Dates meet diary, diary meet dates...

### Sunderland Comic Con

21-22 February

Al Ewing, Bryan Talbot and John Wagner are among the guests scheduled to appear at the north-east comic book festival. <http://sunderlandcomiccon.com/>



### Bolton Comic Con

1 March

Live in (or near) Bolton? Stuck for plans the first Sunday in March? Then you’re in luck because the comic con is coming to town. <http://bit.ly/BoltonComicCon>

### EM-Con

15 March

Game Of Thrones, Red Dwarf, Atlantis and Doctor Who are among the shows represented at the Nottingham con. <http://www.em-con.co.uk/>

### Cardiff Film And Comic Con

21-22 March

Buffy’s James Marsters and Ray Park, Maul himself, Darth Vader, can be found at the dragon country con. <http://www.cardiffcomiccon.com/>

### Yorkshire Cosplay Con

4 April

Anime, comic book, videogame and, of course, cosplay fans won’t want to miss this family-friendly day out in Rotherham. <http://www.yorkshirecosplayconvention.co.uk/>



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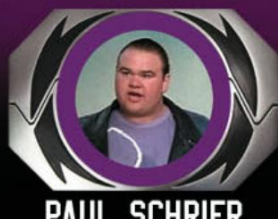


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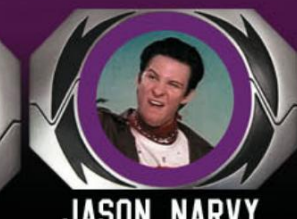
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Email: [sfx@futurenet.com](mailto:sfx@futurenet.com) Web: [www.gamesradar.com/sfx](http://www.gamesradar.com/sfx)

### EDITORIAL

Editor: Richard Edwards, [richard.edwards@futurenet.com](mailto:richard.edwards@futurenet.com)  
Deputy Art Editor: Catherine Kirkpatrick, [catherine.kirkpatrick@futurenet.com](mailto:catherine.kirkpatrick@futurenet.com)  
Operations Editor: Alex Cox, [alex.cox@futurenet.com](mailto:alex.cox@futurenet.com)  
Production Editor: Russell Lewin, [russell.lewin@futurenet.com](mailto:russell.lewin@futurenet.com)  
Features Editor: Nick Setchfield, [nick.setchfield@futurenet.com](mailto:nick.setchfield@futurenet.com)  
Home Entertainment Editor (Reviews): Ian Berriman, [ian.berriman@futurenet.com](mailto:ian.berriman@futurenet.com)  
Community Editor (News): Jordan Farley, [jordan.farley@futurenet.com](mailto:jordan.farley@futurenet.com)  
US Editor (East Coast): Tara Bennett, [usaeast@sfx.co.uk](mailto:usaeast@sfx.co.uk)  
US Editor (West Coast): Joseph McCabe, [usawest@sfx.co.uk](mailto:usawest@sfx.co.uk)

### CONTRIBUTORS

Sam Ashurst, Saxon Bullock, Bonnie Burton, Paul Cemmick, Nick Chen, Nicola Clarke, Maria Colino, Sarah Dobbs, Penny Dreadful, Rhian Drinkwater, Matt Elliott, Steven Ellis, Dean Evans, Paul Garner, Dave Golder, Tom Hawker, Stephen Jewell, David Langford, Miriam McDonald, James Mordam, Joe Nazzaro, Jayne Nelson, Steve O'Brien, Andrew Osmond, Oliver Pfeiffer, Eddie Robson, Will Salmon, Adrian Tchaikovsky, Alex Thomas, Chris Thurston, Calum Waddell, Andy Watt, David West, Jonathan Wright

### FILM GROUP, LONDON

Editor (Total Film): Jane Crowther (maternity)  
Acting Editor (Total Film): Rosie Fletcher Managing Art Editor: Karl Jacques  
Screenings Editor: Matthew Leyland News Editor: Matt Maytum  
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### ADVERTISING

For all advertising enquiries please contact:  
Adrian Hill, 01225 442244, [adrian.hill@futurenet.com](mailto:adrian.hill@futurenet.com)

MARKETING AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

Group Marketing Manager: Laura Driffield, [laura.driffield@futurenet.com](mailto:laura.driffield@futurenet.com)  
Marketing Manager: Kristianne Stanton, [kristianne.stanton@futurenet.com](mailto:kristianne.stanton@futurenet.com)

### PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

Production Controller: Vivienne Calvert, [vivienne.calvert@futurenet.com](mailto:vivienne.calvert@futurenet.com)  
Production Manager: Mark Constance, [mark.constance@futurenet.com](mailto:mark.constance@futurenet.com)  
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2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT Tel: 020 7429 4000  
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### CIRCULATION

Trade Marketing Manager: Michelle Brock, 020 7429 3683  
[michelle.brock@futurenet.com](mailto:michelle.brock@futurenet.com)

### LICENSING

International Director: Regina Erak, [regina.erak@futurenet.com](mailto:regina.erak@futurenet.com)  
Tel: +44 (0)1225 442244 Fax: +44 (0)1225 732275

### THE SENIOR PARTNERS

Group Editor-in-Chief: Dave Bradley  
Group Art Director: Graham Dalzell  
Head of Content & Marketing, Film, Music and Games: Declan Gough  
Content & Marketing Director: Nial Ferguson

### SUBSCRIBE TO SFX

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"Yes, but he never actually scrubbed the vole"



INSURGENT

# LAST FACTION

The second film in the *Divergent* series is reaching for the sky, Richard Edwards finds out

EXCLUSIVE  
INTERVIEWS!





# HEROES

**A** FUNNY THING HAPPENED to *Divergent* on the way to the big screen. While it was busy becoming the closest thing to a rival for *The Hunger Games*' crown as queen of the YA sci-fi franchises, its young stars suddenly became hot property in Hollywood. Not a bad place to be when you've got a sequel, *The Divergent Series: Insurgent*, on the way.

Not only has leading lady Shailene Woodley followed up her starring role as heroine Tris Prior with a memorable turn in hit teen weepie *The Fault In Our Stars*, but Ansel Elgort was her co-star in *Fault...*; Miles Teller's nabbed the role of Mr Fantastic in the upcoming *Fantastic Four* reboot and has also attracted awards season buzz as a young drummer in *Whiplash*; Zoe Kravitz is about to put the pedal to the metal in *Mad Max: Fury Road*; and Jai Courtney will be the new Kyle Reese in *Terminator: Genisys*. Not bad for a bunch of 20-somethings who – while hardly unknown – were far from hot box office when they signed up for a big-screen adaptation of Victoria Roth's bestselling book series.

"It's thrilling," producer Lucy Fisher tells *SFX*. "We've now done two movies together and we know them really well. It's thrilling to pick people that turn out to be that talented for your own movie, and then to watch them fly into their future with the kind of work they've each been doing. Everyone's cheering everyone else on. That's the good part. The bad part is now trying to schedule them!"

## GRIM FUTURE

A quick recap for anyone yet to choose a faction. Roth's phenomenally successful trilogy of novels (*Divergent*, *Insurgent*, *Allegiant*) is set in a post-apocalyptic future where the authorities keep order by sifting the populace into five factions based on their personalities: Abnegation (the selfless – they love a bit of public service); Erudite (the intellectual elite – they like technology); Dauntless (the brave – they're into tattoos); Amity (the peaceful – anything for a quiet life); and Candor (the honest – they tell it like it is).

In the first movie, Beatrice "Tris" Prior's mandatory, state-sanctioned aptitude tests revealed that she was Divergent, possessing attributes of all five factions – a big no no. So she left her home in Abnegation to join the all-action Dauntless group, spending the film learning the ropes, forming a relationship with instructor Four (Theo James) and keeping her ➡



Divergent status a secret from the movie's Big Bad, Erudite leader Jeanine (Kate Winslet).

"They've gone through 40 years of living in a year," laughs Douglas Wick, Fisher's fellow producer and real-life husband. "So Tris has begun in the normal rite of passage of trying to find out who she is, where she'll excel, with the conventional rite of passage identity problems. Then things start to get much more complicated as she finds out she's different. But when she starts to discover who she is, to have both parents die, to have to kill a close friend, and to have the world she knows ripped apart – that's as traumatising an event you can give a young woman."

"Yeah, I think everyone was weathered by what they went through in the first movie," Fisher adds. "The characters are all much more complicated. The first one is very much about finding yourself and trying to find your own identity and separate from parents and do that. In this one it's, 'Okay, I have my identity. Now, what do I do with it? What kind of person am I going to be with that?' It's the next level of evolution as a human being, and things aren't so black-and-white."

*Insurgent* opens with Tris, Four (now also revealed to be Divergent) and a small group of allies (including Tris's Erudite brother Caleb – Elgort) on the run from the authorities. Dauntless leading light Eric (Courtney) is now Jeanine's attack dog hunting them down, as their fugitive status takes them to places we

Kate Winslet resumes her role as nasty Jeanine.



Factionless, in a world encumbered by rules, are more or less rule-less. Part of the fantasy of the Factionless is freedom, subversiveness, not having to do your homework. We took that very seriously, even in the construction of the Factionless world. From afar they seem to be homeless, then you see that they've hidden the fact that they're very well organised. We basically said, how do you show a world hidden beneath the city, that's highly

## "WE SAID, 'HOW DO YOU SHOW A WORLD HIDDEN BENEATH A CITY?'"

haven't seen before, expanding the *Divergent* world in the tradition of all good sequels.

"We don't have to spend 10 minutes explaining the whole setup, and it's a big relief," laughs Fisher. "In the first film Tris was born and grew up in Abnegation and then she moves to Dauntless so we sort of saw that whole thing, but this time we go to Amity and Candor and Erudite. So we experience a whole other way of living and thinking."

We also get to meet an entirely new group – or more accurately a group we didn't actually know were a group. The Factionless were all over the first movie, but we thought they were just vagrants wandering around future Chicago because they had no place else to go. In *Insurgent* it'll turn out they're actually a rather well-organised outfit, led by franchise newcomer Naomi Watts as Evelyn – who just happens to be Four's mum. "She's our new villain and a great addition," says Fisher. "She's the source of a lot of Four's problems, and someone you can't quite get a pulse on. What is she really...?"

"From our interaction with the fans we found that there was really a fascination with the Factionless," chips in Wick. "Because the

functional? So there's a lot of warrens and each warren you'd see is made of repurposed junk from the other factions."

### FRESH START

With *Divergent* director Neil Burger having stepped aside, *Insurgent* has a new man at the helm in the form of Robert Schwentke (*Flightplan*, *RED*, *RIPD*). "Robert had two really strong qualities," explains Wick. "First, he's completely fascinated by psychology. When he came into the room, he was so fascinated by the issues facing Tris, of how a person who's had so much grief and guilt manages to go on in the world. He came in with just an utter fascination of how someone survives that kind of trauma."

"The second thing he brought was an extraordinary visual instinct. He was really intrigued by the tool that Veronica creates to sort of dramatically see someone's inner life. When you talk about things like fear landscapes or these sims to see what your nature is – how much you're Erudite, how much you're Amity – to do those as vibrant action scenes, he came in with dazzling visual ➔

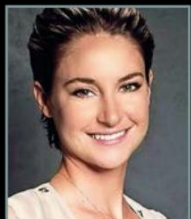


"Hold on tight! We've another two films to do after this!"



# SHAI TIME

One-on-one with **SHAILENE WOODLEY**



## How has Tris evolved since the first movie?

► When you first meet her, she's very naive and hasn't been exposed to the world. She's learning things for the first time and is having to pull upon strengths she didn't

know existed. In this movie, she's been through the wringer, and she knows how to fight a fight. So she's much stronger and she has a lot of emotional fuel to bring her through the next stage of her fight against Jeanine.

## It looks like there's more action in *Insurgent*...

► Yeah, there's a lot more action. The world was just bigger. The action sequences in the first movie are maybe two minutes. In this movie they're like seven or eight minutes. Filming seven or eight minutes of that type of thing is about two weeks' worth of work. In that way, it was a lot of fun. The first movie was more fight sequences and choreography. This was more wire work and Parkour, climbing and running and jumping off things.

## How much training did you have to do to get in shape?

► We trained so much for the first one, and then I did *Fault In Our Stars* and lost all muscle mass and a bunch of weight. So getting back into this one was fun because we got to bulk up a little bit again. I'm very lucky: I'm athletic by nature. For me, I find it fun to get back in shape and test myself physically.

## With *Divergent* and *The Fault In Our Stars* being hits, it's been a big year for you. Has their success changed your life?

► Yeah, it's definitely affected my life because I'm busier. But other than that, not too much. Career-wise, I definitely have some more opportunities now to make smaller movies that before I couldn't get made, which is awesome. But as far as everything else goes, not too much.

## There are lots of fantastical simulations in the *Divergent* movies. Do you enjoy the opportunity to go to places you wouldn't in most movies?

► It's always fun to do simulations and whatnot. As a filmmaker, you get to bring a sense of: "We've never seen this before, so anything can happen." But as an actor, I want to make sure that they seem real and very realistic. When you're dreaming, it feels real. You wake up and go, "Oh my god, I battled a giant spider last night," because it felt so real. So for all the simulations, I wanted to make sure that Tris felt like it was actually happening.

## The *Divergent* fanbase are very passionate. How have you found interacting with them since you've been playing Tris?

► I honestly don't know too well because I don't really interact with fans really - I stay away from social media and the only time I ever really see them is at premieres. But we obviously want to maintain the books' integrity and our faithfulness to the storyline.

## How do you feel about going back to play Tris for the two *Allegiant* movies?

► I feel good. I'm excited to read the script. Even though I know what *Allegiant* is about, I don't know how faithful they're going to be to that book or if they're going to change it a lot. So I'm along for the ride as well, just like the audience.



Expect more gunplay and action in this second movie.





ideas. But what was great is it was always connected to psychology. We had too many directors who came in and they were either too much into the psychology or too much into CG effects which wouldn't really be rooted in character. He really came in with a huge number of ideas and insights on both fronts."

Those trips into characters' minds – which formed a key part of *Divergent* with the initiation challenges Dauntless wannabes had to face – will be a part of the mix once again, though there'll be new twists. "It's much more visceral, much more visual," says Wick. "One of the things we were allowed to do, just in terms of being faithful to the story, was the old sims are done out of Dauntless, so everything was appropriately low-tech. Now that we go to the labs at Erudite, we have much more licence – and we fully take it."

It also looks like the sci-fi elements of the movie are going to be ramped up this time out. For starters there's a new McGuffin that didn't appear in the books, as Jeanine is obsessed with a box that could hold the secret of how



far, fans have sort of said, 'Yeah, that made it less confusing for me.' But we'll see."

Keeping the fans happy is one of the movie's biggest challenges. They *love* the books, debating minutiae to such a degree that any misstep could be crushed by the blogosphere.

"We try to stay true to the essence," says Fisher. "We treat the fans like our partners in

## "THERE'S ALWAYS FANS WHO DON'T WANT ANYTHING CHANGED"

the faction-based society came to exist from the ruins of the old world...

"In the climax of the book, Tris and Four find a message," explains Wick. "What we basically did was take Veronica's idea and try to adapt it into something that would work better for a movie. The license we took was to get into the room at the end of the book, so Tris has to face down one of her demons. We made the opening of the box not just be that one scene, but many scenes."

"It's an organising principle that wasn't in the book, that Veronica likes," says Fisher. "So

some ways, and respect them and invite them into the process a little bit – because we don't want to disappoint them. They understand the material as well as anybody. But there's always a group of fans that don't want anything changed at all. They'll write pages about how the colour of Tris's hair was not how they imagined it. It's an interesting world!

"The other thing that we're very mindful of is – and this is a very un-cynical thing – when you say 33 million books sold, unless you're a moron, you say Veronica has tapped into something," adds Wick. "She's articulating







Some school sports days are a bit livelier than others...



Shailene Woodley's hair suffers for her art in *Insurgent*.

some powerful thing in the culture. Frequently, we go back and ask why did all those people want to buy the books? They might say it's because Tris's hair colour is red, but then you have to use your own common sense to say, no, that's probably not what turned them on. It's more likely to be because Veronica is an extraordinary storyteller."

The story doesn't end here, of course, and Schwentke will return to direct *Allegiant: Part One* (inevitably, the final book is being split in two) when it goes before the cameras this summer. "The challenges are enormous," Wick admits. "On *Insurgent*, we believe that

we continue to better explore the characters, and to make the storytelling compelling. We're very aware that each of the next two movies have to continue to advance creatively. You have to see more fascinating aspects of the character. It's got to become more compelling visually and with more groundbreaking effects. It just has to do all those things better than last time, or certainly the people involved would be very disappointed." **SFX**

**The Divergent Series: Insurgent is released on 20 March. Veronica Roth's Divergent books are available now in bookshops and as ebooks.**

# FOUR PLAY

THEO JAMES comes to the Four in part two



**Are you much like Four in real-life?**

► I love beating people up [jokes]! I guess he's probably more uptight than me. I hope. He's a bit damaged, I guess you'd say, and probably more highly

strung in a way. I do like playing this character because there's a stillness to him which I always found interesting, even from the books. It's fun to come back to him.

**Four has a lot of tattoos. Did you get tired of putting them on every day?**

► Yes. I was thinking about getting them for real, just so I didn't have to go through the make-up process – because you do them every day for five-and-a-half months, it gets a little bit wearing at the end. The one on the back is fine because you only do it for specific scenes. But by the end I was saying, "I think he should be wearing high-necked collar things constantly. He should look like a priest wearing '60s roll necks or something!"

**Now you're involved in a big franchise, do you have to be more careful about the other roles you take on?**

► You have to kind of make smart choices. You do films and the easy flattering options come up, but they're not necessarily the best ones for your career longevity. You have to be strong and say no to some stuff, and then try aggressively to get some things that are going to be better for you in the long run. At the end of the day, I'm an actor. You're going to be doing this for years, you hope.

**Are the people who spot you for *The Inbetweeners Movie* different to the ones who recognise you from *Divergent*?**

► Yeah, definitely. It's funny being an actor. Sometimes the thing that someone recognises you from is the unexpected one, which is fun in a way. It might be, even, your first job ever, or something you'd almost forgotten you'd done. But yes. If you walk into a room, you can tell what the people probably know you from.



© GETTY (1)

# WIN!

Divergent books up for grabs!

We've teamed up with *Divergent Series* book publishers HarperCollins to give 10 lucky people a set of Divergent books – *Divergent*, *Insurgent*, *Allegiant* and *Four: A Divergent Collection*.

To stand a chance of winning, head to [www.futurecompetitions.com/divergent-series](http://www.futurecompetitions.com/divergent-series) and answer this:

**In which movie did Shailene Woodley play George Clooney's daughter?**

- a) *The Descendants*
- b) *Ocean's Thirteen*
- c) *Syriana*

Competition is open from Wednesday 4 February until midnight on Tuesday 3 March 2015. For terms and conditions, see [www.futurecompetitions.com/divergentseries](http://www.futurecompetitions.com/divergentseries).





SPOILER  
WARNING!

# AFTER TH



Is anywhere truly safe in **The Walking Dead**? Joseph McCabe is on set as the zombie saga heads into the wilderness...

# EFALL



Standing underneath a ladder during a zombie apocalypse has got to be asking for bad luck.

**IT'S A RARE TIME OF CALM** in the world of *The Walking Dead*. Having escaped the cannibalistic madmen of Terminus, Rick Grimes and company found temporary refuge in the church of Father Gabriel — a holy man who'd fallen from grace — only to lose that shelter to a horde of walkers. But even greater tragedy followed, when they lost their friend Beth to a power-crazed despot ruling an Atlanta hospital. Yet this October afternoon, as *SFX* visits the show's set in Senoia, Georgia, all is strangely silent. There are no screams, no tears, not a single zombie in sight.

It's the most chilling scenario of all.

Down a quiet, sunny suburban street stroll *The Walking Dead*'s survivors: Maggie (Lauren Cohan) and Tara (Alanna Masterson), Carol (Melissa McBride) and Michonne (Danai Gurira), Glenn (Steven Yeun) and newfound friend Noah (Tyler James Williams). Rick (Andrew Lincoln) follows them, his eyes watching his friends' backs carefully. Then he slows his pace for a moment — and suddenly tears off after them. He's driven by... something unseen. Is there a threat? Or have these determined souls at long last found some peace in a world at war with itself? Is this, in fact, the Alexandria Safe-Zone the group finds in the *Walking Dead* comic book?

As usual with the show, the details of the scene aren't shared by cast and crew, who are forbidden from spoiling any of its secrets, no matter how small they might seem. But when we later catch up with this episode's director, executive producer and special effects make-up maestro Greg Nicotero, we do our best to wrinkle out an explanation.

"There are always recurring themes that drive our characters," Nicotero tells *SFX*. "Once they left Terminus at the beginning of season five they were out on their own again. A lot of what we've explored is, 'Who do these people become while they're out in the wilderness?' Being out there changes people. ➔





## LIFE AFTER BETH

NORMAN REEDUS ON DARYL DIXON'S LOVE LIFE...

**Fans want to see Daryl happy, perhaps with a partner. He came close to that with Beth...**

► I think if they came close and Daryl had those feelings for her, he may have felt them but I don't think he totally understood them. So there was a little bit of that there. I just don't know that he knew what that was, to be honest. There's a certain connection with Carol of course. She's a lot like him. Carol's probably his go-to girl for someone to lean on. But as far as relationships, I don't know that Daryl's ready for that. But never say never.

**Do you think he still has some growing up to do?**

► I just don't think he's done a lot of it. He comes from a background where he feels like he's one of the undesirable ones. So he doesn't think anybody would be attracted to him that way. He spent most of his childhood with his brother doing guy things. If any dirty stuff has gone down, it was probably Merle doing it while Daryl waited outside. You know what I mean [laughs]?

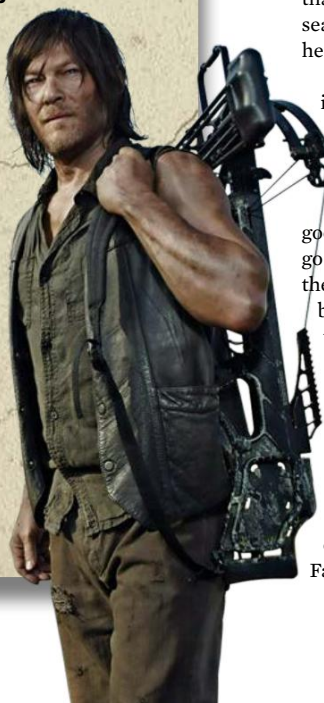
**So his self-worth isn't high enough for him to pair off just yet?**

► I don't know. Michonne's been giving me eyeballs lately [laughs].

**After five years, what keeps Daryl exciting for you?**

► I find new things about him all the time. He's very interesting. There's also all these other relationships with these characters. There's a real trust he has with Rick, first off. Then the Glenn character, Daryl had a soft spot for him when he started fighting with him, and now that relationship is a bigger, stronger brotherhood. There's some new guys in the group, that maybe we haven't spent much time with. And now there's a whole new group!

Joseph McCabe



"I call this my action hero pose. Look how I ignore the threat behind me!"

## "YOU CAN'T JUST SHOW UP AND ASSUME IT'S ALL GONNA BE ROSES"

Definitely one thing we explored with the first half of this season is how that happens. How being out there changes people. Even as early as season three, we know that Michonne was a different person when she lived out in the wilderness until she met Andrea. Then they found Woodbury. So that's definitely a theme that will continue into the second half of this season — who do we become when we're out here. It's a really fascinating character study."

If our heroes have indeed found themselves in a safe zone, could everything they've endured render them incapable of living in it? Could some serious post-traumatic stress disorder spoil everything?

"That's a great question. That definitely goes to our story — will people be able to go on with their lives after everything that they've experienced? Look at what Rick has been through. Look at what Daryl's been through. Look at what Carl's been through. And look at how those events have shaped each of those characters. That's definitely something we will come across in the second part of the season: who these people have been transformed into by the deeds that they have seen and done. Rick is clearly distrustful. We've seen it after episode one in Terminus. When he meets Father Gabriel in episode two, he doesn't

trust him. He has no reason to. In this sort of dog-eat-dog world, you gotta earn people's trust. You can't just show up and instantly assume that it's all gonna be roses. That's again something that's very important in terms of our show, that aspect of who they've become and how they are able to trust people that they meet on the road."

## NO ESCAPE

As if to illustrate his point, Nicotero shoots another scene this day. Rick, who's shed the beard he's grown these last few years, talks with a young blonde-haired woman in the middle of the empty street. There's a sense of familiarity and what almost seems like an attraction between the two. But their discussion grows serious, and she shakes her head at him. As Rick walks away, she looks after him, pity in her eyes...

One person who *has* earned Rick's trust is Abraham Ford, the widowed US Army sergeant who, until recently, wanted only to reach Washington, DC with his travelling companion Eugene Porter; who'd claimed to possess a means of stopping the zombie apocalypse. But when Eugene confessed he'd been lying, that he had no solution, despair crippled Abraham, though he still managed to







Some people really like scaffolding poles.



The truly horrific part is the dry cleaning bill.



come to the group's rescue when the church was overrun. Nicotero says the back half of this season finds Abraham rebuilding himself.

"One of the things I find fascinating about that dynamic," says Nicotero, "is if Eugene hadn't lied to Abraham, Abraham would have been dead months ago. At the end of episode five when you see Abraham walking away, you know that the guy's on a suicide mission. It's only a matter of time before he's bitten and he's killed. But Eugene, by concocting the lie, saved Abraham's life. So I think now where we are in that story is Abraham questioning who he is and what his new mission is. Something you have to keep in the back of your mind is there would have been no Abraham if it hadn't have been for Eugene lying."

No shock so far this year has been greater than the death of Beth Greene in the show's mid-season finale. It shattered Daryl, her sister Maggie, and countless viewers across the globe. *SFX* asks Nicotero how the demise of the show's most innocent regular character will echo in the storyline.

"Especially in that regard," he nods. "In what felt like a senseless manner... Some of what I hope really came across in the episode was, Beth sacrificed herself for Noah in episode four. When Noah escapes, she allows herself to get caught so that he can get away. Beth has really made the ultimate sacrifice. So at the end of that episode, when you see Beth step up to Dawn, there's a moment there where Beth has that realisation that Dawn has lied to her and manipulated her. She does it out of support for Noah. Yeah, it was a truly heartbreaking moment because of the sacrifice she made. Not that she knew she was gonna be shot. I don't think she knew. But attacking her with a pair of scissors was something that showed how strong Beth is. I think a lot of people always thought, 'Oh, she's small and she's frail and she's kind of meek and weak.' There's nothing weak about Beth's character. She survived so much. And this whole moment of her defiance against Dawn for the last time, it was critical."

## STAYING FAITHFUL

Under current showrunner Scott Gimple, *The Walking Dead's* renewed faithfulness to its comic source has found it earning more praise than ever before. Will that fidelity continue through the remainder of season five?

"Oh yeah. Without a doubt. Scott Gimple is very aware of the storyline of the comic book. There's always those bits and pieces that come →



"Singing in the rain..."



It's important to find time to smile.



## BETTER RED THAN DEAD

MICHAEL CUDLITZ IS THE MAN BENEATH ABRAHAM'S MOUSTACHE...

### How did Abraham's distinct look develop?

► When we first started, Josh McDermitt — who plays Eugene — and myself, we both have similarly coloured hair and we both have similarly roundish faces. We both could be brothers out of Boston. Scott wanted to make sure we did not look at all similar. So they darkened his hair up, and my blond hair they turned red. Which is more like the colour in the graphic novel, if you look it up — because it's bright *Scooby-Doo* Daphne orange. That's what we went with. The moustache speaks for itself. The hair gets done every two weeks and the moustache we colour every day.

### Has Abraham had trouble adjusting to working with a broader group of people?

► Well, I always say it's much easier to have the holidays with your immediate family than with your extended family. They're still family, but there's still problems. We will be exploring those growing pains as the family gets larger. They're getting past the point where they're living from moment to moment. When that happens, you look at a bigger plan, and when you start factoring a bigger plan, other issues arise.

### Can you talk about the scripts you've seen for the second half of this season?

► The whole thing has just been awesome. The writers do a great job of not diluting the stories. When they focus on certain characters, they're focusing on those characters. And it's okay to be in the background. But when you're pulled to the front, you feel very honoured to be in this group of actors and performers and to tell those stories. Joseph McCabe





## "I GET REQUESTS FROM PEOPLE WHO WANT TO BE WALKERS"

directly out of the comic. Even if it's not the exact same characters, you know the setpieces, and you go, 'Oh yeah!' I love that we change it up just a little bit, but certainly the situations that happen in the comic are even more of a guide for us than in previous seasons."

This season, Nicotero directs four of the 16 episodes – the premiere, the midseason premiere, as well as episode 12 (shooting today) and the finale – more than any other helmer. "So Mr Gimple and company have entrusted me with a lot of their very big storytelling moments," he says proudly.

Despite his increased responsibilities, Nicotero continues to supervise the show's award-winning undead make-up effects. To his torment, just as every actor in Hollywood wanted to play a villain on the '60s *Batman* TV show, it now seems every fan of *The Walking Dead* wants to be a zombie.

"That's a great analogy. I hadn't thought of that," he laughs. "People are enamoured with the idea of experiencing what it's like. We've certainly gotten a lot of requests. I get a ton of requests from people who want to be walkers on the show. The bottom line is, when they get into it, they gotta go through the make-up process and they're out in the woods and they have the contact lenses and the dentures. They all think it's a great idea on paper, but actually getting down there and going through the entire process... I have thousands of requests – 'I'll make my way down there and I'll put myself up...' I'm always curious as to whether people would still be as enamoured with it once they were finished."

Like all who work on the show, Nicotero is



The world as we know it might have ended, but dental hygiene is still important.

also concerned about its secrets leaking out. "It's always tricky," he sighs. "Because we do have to be careful. There are a lot of people whose sole purpose is to spoil the shows. And we go to tremendous lengths to make sure that doesn't happen. So there have been times when we've had to be really cautious about who can come on set and be walkers. Because people have made an effort to post stuff online, which just ruins it for everybody."

But he smiles as he recalls the lucky few

who have joined the ranks of the undead.

"I know a lot of people who have been on the show that are really proud of it. There's just something cool about wanting to be a walker. Who you get killed by is also very important. Because it's a bit of a status thing..."

"If you get killed by Rick or Daryl, he grins, "that's *definitely* a badge of honour." **SFX**

*The Walking Dead returns to Fox in the UK from Monday 9 February.*

## THE TOP 5 MOST HEARTBREAKING DEATHS ON THE WALKING DEAD



### LORI GRIMES

► Sure she'd gone all Lady Macbeth on us in season two, but the aftermath of Lori's death – the birth of Judith, Carl's shooting his mother, Rick's breakdown – was multilayered in its tragedy.



### MERLE DIXON

► After saving Michonne and killing the Governor's men, Merle himself was killed in turn by the tyrant, proving the death of a reformed man can be as sad as that of an innocent.



### LIZZIE SAMUELS

► After losing her own little girl to walkers, Carol is forced to kill the crazed child Lizzie to protect Judith, herself, and Tyreese. We knew she had no choice, but in so doing, she kills a part of her soul.



### BOB STOOKEY

► Having conquered alcoholism and survived Terminus, Bob has renewed hope for the future, and the love of Sasha. Yet his death is all the more heartbreaking for how gracefully he accepts it.



### BETH GREENE

► We'd met numerous innocents before on *The Walking Dead*. But none we'd gotten to know quite as well as the doe-eyed ingenue with the voice of an angel. The biggest shock of the season so far.



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# John Barrowman

The former Captain Jack on becoming a villain in the DC Universe

WORDS BY JOSEPH MCCABE PORTRAIT BY DEBRA HURFOD BROWN

John Barrowman earned his geek stripes playing fan fave Captain Jack Harkness on *Doctor Who* and its hit spin-off series *Torchwood*. Now there's another genre credit on his showreel. A lifelong comic book aficionado, he jumped at the chance to appear in *Arrow* as Oliver Queen's arch-enemy, the notorious Malcolm Merlyn (known as "Merlyn the Magician" in DC comics, the dark bowman first appeared in 1971's *Justice League Of America* #94). Barrowman's portrayal of the vengeance-minded businessman and assassin proved popular enough to win him a regular spot in the show's current third season. *SFX* recently caught up with the charismatic performer, and he shared his thoughts on Merlyn's determination to play an active role in his daughter Thea's life this series, no matter how much suffering it causes her brother Oliver and Team Arrow...

## BIODATA

► **OCCUPATION:** Actor  
► **BORN:** 11 March 1967  
► **FROM:** Glasgow, Scotland  
► **GREATEST HITS:** *Miss Saigon*, *Beauty And The Beast*, *Doctor Who*, *Desperate Housewives*, *Torchwood*, *Zero Dark Thirty*, *Arrow*  
► **RANDOM FACT:** Though he now portrays *Arrow*'s "Dark Archer", Barrowman was a decidedly lighter bowman as the lead in *Robin Hood - The Pantomime Adventure*.

**Malcolm Merlyn's a great manipulator. Lately he's been toying with the emotions of Oliver Queen's sister, Thea. Does he hold any real love for her?**

► I think Malcolm has a very difficult time in showing love. Malcolm can control people with money, power, and also with his destructive techniques. [His son] Tommy got emotionally involved with a girl, and love destroyed him. He also lost Moira that way. She sacrificed herself for love. He only has Thea left. He's got to control her by controlling her emotions. He loves her, but in a very different way. To control someone emotionally you have to break them down.

**Malcolm is also the only father figure left in Oliver's life.**

► If you go back, when it was Tommy's birthday and I walked in with a birthday present for Tommy and he didn't want it,

who did I throw it to and wink? Ollie. Because, as Malcolm Merlyn, I see Oliver as just as much a son as I did Tommy. But Oliver is the son that I always wanted Tommy to be — the playboy,

**"I would love my character to cross over into *The Flash*"**

the guy out there doing things and making it happen. When I found out that he was *Arrow*, I didn't kill him. I couldn't. Although I fought viciously with him. Maybe that's why I faked my death, so I didn't have to kill him.

**Is Malcolm truly evil?**

► Malcolm's not evil [laughs]. I think Malcolm's misunderstood. I'm talking as Malcolm Merlyn here — if you think I'm bad, let's go back and look at everything that Oliver has done. We're both just doing the same thing but going about it in very different ways. One is deemed a hero, and the other one is not.

**What's it like playing a father?**

► It's interesting for me because I'm at a point in my life now where I have been the hero and the younger character, and I'm now the dad. Which is really great because I get to kind of relax a little bit. I get to go home at night and have two glasses of wine... I was gonna say one, but that would be a lie [laughs]. Because I'm not gonna be the one taking my shirt off, you know? I still could, but I don't have to worry about that any more.

**Everyone on *Arrow* appears to be finding romance.**

**Will Malcolm?**

► I hope so. Who knows who's going to come in? I have fished through my DC Encyclopedia that I keep by my bed, just to see who I might want to fall in love with [laughs]. I'm a big geek and a big fan myself. I love the fact that I'm a villain in a friggin' comic book that I grew up reading. In fact... My sister and I write together. We have a book series and we've done a couple of comic books, and I've actually mentioned to [executive producer] Andrew Kreisberg that I would love if my sister and I could do a spin-off comic for Merlyn, a look into his past or an offshoot of what's happening now. That would be great.

**What do you think about the explosion of DC TV shows making it to the screen?**

► In the '70s and '80s, when I was younger, I used to play with all of the DC Mego figures. I still have all of them, and over the years I've bought all the rest. So for me DC was always prominent. Then I've had the fortune to meet Stan Lee and know him, and I like Marvel also. I know a lot of people are gonna disagree with me, but you can like both, okay? In my world it's both anyway [laughs]. There has been that Marvel resurgence. Now it's DC's turn. It's great that Warner Brothers and CW are taking a lead in that. I mean, *The Flash*...

**Could Malcolm one day appear on *The Flash*?**

► I would love Malcolm Merlyn to cross over into *The Flash*. I don't know if it will happen, but it would be great; because Starling City and Central City are not that far apart. Growing up, when we were watching things like *The Six Million Dollar Man* and *The Bionic Woman*, you had Oscar Goldman who would be the one that would go back and forth. It made those worlds more real to us, because we believed that they actually existed. And Starling City *does* exist. I hate to tell ya. I live in it. **SFX**

*Arrow is on Sky 1 in the UK and The CW in the US.*













# THE RIVER WILD

Ryan Gosling is taking a potentially treacherous trip down **Lost River**, James Mottram discovers

## “IS THIS THE HOT SEAT?” ASKS

Ryan Gosling, motioning towards an empty chair. Certainly if he's concerned, it is. The star of *Blue Valentine* and *Drive*, Gosling is arguably one of the hottest actors on the planet right now, oozing that rare blend of cult and commercial appeal from every pore. So what's he gone and done? Only slipped behind the camera to direct his first film *Lost River* – an off-kilter tale set in a nightmarish universe that'd give David Lynch bad dreams.

When we meet, in Cannes, Gosling has just premiered the film in the *Un Certain Regard* section. The reviews were mixed – *Variety* dubbed it “inauspicious” – but it's nothing that Gosling can't handle. His last film was for his *Drive* director Nicolas Winding Refn, the Thailand-set thriller *Only God Forgives*; torn apart by many critics in Cannes in 2013, it's since gone on to collect a cult following. *Lost River* may well do the same.

Shot in Detroit, the setting is a gutted American town, left devastated and dilapidated by the economic collapse. Our ➔



Ryan Gosling is getting behind the camera – quite literally here, look!



eyes into this world are single mother Billy (Christina Hendricks) and her two sons – layabout teenager Bones (Iain De Caestecker) and the younger Franky (Landyn Stewart). But while it touches on social realism, *Lost River*'s dream and fable-like qualities send it spinning into an altogether more bizarre realm.

While Bones discovers a submerged city beneath a reservoir, in one of the film's many strange touches, Billy is led to an even darker place. Her desperation to hold onto the family home, despite a lack of funds, takes her into the clutches of a lecherous banker, played by Ben Mendelsohn. "Ryan's film is essentially about the wolves coming to tear apart a family in a crumbling and compromised situation," grins Mendelsohn.

In Gosling's eyes, he was plotting out a fairytale like the Brothers Grimm – "grim" being the operative word. "I tried to use that as a guide. I think there are archetypes in the movie that you find in fairytales. But more than the fairytale, there was this woman with a dream of having a house that she could raise her kids in, and trying to hold onto that dream within the walls of her house. She's maintaining that dream but right outside the doors is the nightmare."

This "nightmare" is a nightclub that'd give *Mulholland Drive*'s Club Silencio a run for its money in the weird stakes. Presided over by Mendelsohn's character, on-stage performers appear to be mutilated or murdered. Eva Mendes (Gosling's real-life partner) plays the star act who appears to be knifed to death, Dario Argento style.

Embroiled in this exploitation-show, Billy soon develops an act where she's peeling off her facial skin, in a sort of warped tribute to *Eyes Without A Face*.

While it's reminiscent of Paris's Le Théâtre du Grand-Guignol, which specialised in natural horror shows, Gosling claims he didn't intend to ape this – until Mendes came along. "She started researching it, and she realised that there was this whole scene in Paris in the late 1800s, early 1900s – this whole death, macabre, Grand Guignol, hell-café, death tavern [thing] – basically this whole idea was not that far-fetched."

Mendes was also responsible for helping out behind the camera, even finding the extraordinary gold-sequin jacket worn by Matt Smith, who plays Bully, a six-pack flexing local thug who rides around town in an armchair tied to the top of a Cadillac, shouting nonsense through a microphone. "She just found it," shrugs Gosling, "and put it on a rack of stuff, and Matt walked in and saw it and said, 'That's it! There it is!' She just has that way."

## UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Bully's attire automatically brings to mind the scorpion-embroidered satin number Gosling sports in *Drive* – one of many creative decisions that led some critics to carp that *Lost River* was derivative. "I think it's clear he's a fan of Nic [Refn] and [David] Lynch and those flavours are in the film," nods Smith, "but I

We'll finally get to see the role that Matt Smith shaved his barnet off for.

also think the film has its own identity and has the identity of Ryan in it. There's a lot of him in the movie. That's why I'm proud of it."

In Gosling's defence, he never tried to hide his influences. The end credits see him thank a series of directors including Refn, Derek Cianfrance (*Blue Valentine*, *The Place Beyond The Pines*) and Terrence Malick (with whom he's just worked on an upcoming project). Also listed was *Hellboy* director Guillermo del Toro. "He read the first draft and I think he read also the final one. He came in at the end when I'd finished the film... he was a bit of a guardian angel, or the Godfather!"

Gosling also plundered the services of cinematographer Benoit Debie, whose CV includes such cult classics as Harmony Korine's *Spring Breakers* and Gaspar Noé's *Irréversible* and *Enter The Void*. "I've been wanting to work with him for years," he says. "He doesn't even have lights. Everything is about trying to capture what's there and capture what's naturally beautiful about it; there's not a lot of artifice around what he does. He's like a painter."

Indeed, if *Lost River*'s narrative can be befuddling, there can be no doubt about the

power of the images that Gosling and his DP have assembled. One shot, of a burning house, is so mesmeric, it sears the skull. "There's nothing more surreal than life," nods Gosling. "We weren't trying to make something surreal. We were trying to focus on the surreal part of those aspects of life. It was important to involve the reality of the people in the environment in order to keep that alive."

He was particularly inspired by working in Detroit, a city that has fallen on hard times since the global economic meltdown. "It has this amazing history but this unknown

Mad Men's Christina Hendricks plays worried single mother Billy.





"I WATCHED TV  
AND I SAW  
MATT SENDING  
ALL THESE  
SPACESHIPS  
TO HELL!"



future. And in the present there's this hope. It's incredibly diverse; there's obviously destruction but there's also this incredible architecture, with endless possibilities. What else is interesting is also what's not there. You feel what's missing. You see what's been lost."

All around him were images of decay – like a free-standing staircase that leads to a space where a house once stood. "Your imagination is working without trying," he says. "You talk to people who live there and they explain to you a neighbourhood that doesn't exist any more. But it's so real to them, that it's almost

there. The challenge of the film was 'How do you shoot something that's not there? How do you capture what's missing? And not just focus on the obvious things that are there.'"

Talking to those involved, Gosling kept things fast and loose during the shoot, improvising off-the-cuff where he could. Irish actress Saoirse Ronan, last seen in Wes Anderson's sumptuous *The Grand Budapest Hotel* and here playing Rat, a friend to Bones, notes: "We would have a scene and learn it the night before and we'd turn up on set and Ryan would say, 'Forget about the scene. Let's have a chat and I'll shoot it.'"

## GOSLING NO-SHOW

One thing not present is Gosling himself, who doesn't make an appearance on screen. This was deliberate, he says. "There are guys out there that are directing themselves, and making it look easy," he marvels. "I don't know how they're doing it, because directing is not easy – and I don't know how they're doing both jobs. For me, it was just enough to try and direct the film."

Fortunately, he was able to turn to the likes of Matt Smith, whose transformation from "commanding universes" on *Doctor Who* to *Lost River*'s resident nut-job is quite startling. So is Gosling a Whovian? "I hadn't been watching the show. But I was watching TV one day and I saw Matt telling all these spaceships... sending them all to hell basically, and I wondered what that was like on set because there were no spaceships there and he must've looked really crazy!"

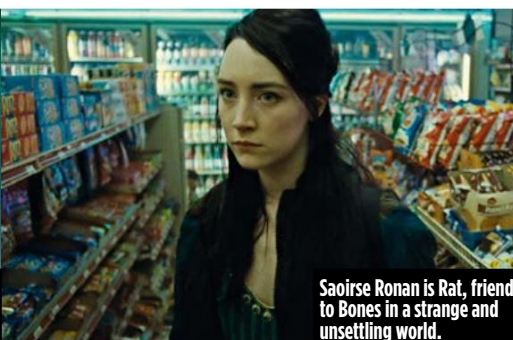
While *Lost River* is undeniably as unhinged as Smith's character, there can be no doubting Gosling's commitment to the project. His mysterious Malick movie aside, he's barely been before a camera in over two years while he trained his sights on completing *Lost River*. Only now, having shot Shane Black's private eye tale *The Nice Guys* with Russell Crowe, has he got back into the Gosling groove.

"This has been three years for me," he says. "You are in a real relationship. When there are problems, you can't abandon them. You have to deal with them. It's not that acting's not hard – it is – but it's only for six months. This is getting to live with something for so long; to live with something for three years is a very different experience." **SFX**

*Lost River* opens on Friday 10 April.



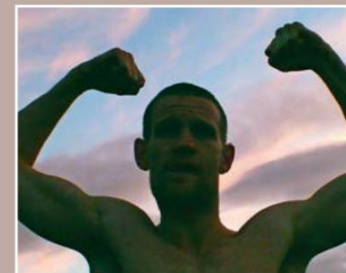
Agents of SHIELD's Iain De Caestecker takes on the role of Bones.



Saoirse Ronan is Rat, friend to Bones in a strange and unsettling world.

"I THOUGHT  
THIS HAD REAL  
ORIGINALITY..."

Matt Smith heads up river...



**What made you want to work on *Lost River*?**

► I really responded to the script. You read so much these days, it's hard to find something original and I thought this had real originality.

**How was Ryan Gosling as a director?**

► Brilliant, which gave me real courage and trust, which is what you want from a director. But also [there was] guidance when you need it. What he did was set up a tone and an environment, where you could take risks and where you could do something bold or where you could, say, go and talk to a character in the road and the camera would come with you.

**What sort of reaction will *Lost River* get? It divided the critics...**

► Well, my best friend saw it – and he's usually pretty mute about everything. But for this, he said, "This film will stay in my dreams for a long time."

**Were you worried about leaving *Doctor Who* and finding your way after such an iconic role?**

► No, it's quite exciting. Hopefully you go and find new challenges. I'm ever grateful to *Doctor Who*. It changed my life and I wouldn't be here without it today, so it was hard to leave but I had to. It was the right time and I wanted to explore things like this.

**Since you left the show, have you been following Peter Capaldi?**

► Of course. I'm a fan. I'm a fan like anyone else now – cheering from the sidelines!

**Now you're in *Terminator: Genisys*. What can you tell us?**

► I can say I'm very excited to be a part of it – I love those movies! Obviously I can't talk in too much detail about my role.

**What's your maxim for acting?**

► You just try and keep working and hope no one figures you out!



# I, SPY





# Late-achiever AGENTS OF SHIELD looks like it's getting ever more intriguing, as Tara Bennett finds out from Agent Coulson – Clark Gregg

**IT WAS A SLOW BURN BUT** Marvel's *Agents Of SHIELD* finally seems to have realised its promise. Running with the headwind provided by *The Winter Soldier*'s shock reveal that the clandestine agency was infiltrated by Hydra, season two has seen agent Phil Coulson and his team tasked by Nick Fury to cure the cancer from within.

This year *SHIELD*'s explored the secrets of newbie agent Skye's parentage, revealing that she's an Inhuman harbouring superpowers that will change the team's entire dynamic. Where does the series go from here – and how does it fit into the bigger picture of the Marvel universe? *SFX* sat down with Agent Coulson himself, the ever enthusiastic Clark Gregg, actor and longtime Marvel fanboy, to discuss just where the show's heading as it returns to our screens after that game-changing season finale...

**Season one of *SHIELD* clearly had teething problems, especially considering how much hype surrounded its launch. How do you assess it now, a year later?**

It was way too much pressure, in my opinion, to try and launch a show in. Yet I marvelled every day at the actors who have stepped into that pressure cooker and stared it down when it was bumpy. Also the environment that it was created around didn't necessarily lend itself to experimentation. That said, I'm still very pleased with a lot of the work we did in season one. I also couldn't be more impressed with the way the writers thought on their feet, wrote to what was working and had to hold out their big reveal last year with Hydra. This year one of them is an Inhuman but the Inhumans concept was revealed by episode 10 so as a Marvel fan that makes me suspect there's another one coming at least...

**Last year *SHIELD* benefited from cinematic mythology that infused the series with new purpose. Now the series gets to lay the groundwork for the upcoming *Inhumans* film. Is that a lot of pressure on the show?**

Whatever crossovers it has with what's coming cinematically, those things are fun but it means there's more cool parts of the Marvel universe we get to use. I think what works about our show, and what I'm excited about, is that people care about the characters who have been there and the ones added this year. Our show has to work on its own. But you couldn't have a show about *SHIELD* that didn't deal with Hydra and what was going on with *The Winter Soldier*. And you couldn't have what happened in *The Winter Soldier* happen without someone on our direct, core team being affected. You can't launch the Inhumans and not have someone from our show affected, especially when it was set up and intended. That said, I love the Inhumans because they aren't your normal superheroes. They're different than that and an alien race living sometimes among us with co-mingled DNA in many cases. It gets into some of the other Marvel properties with letters in them [he means the Fox controlled *X-Men*] that ask "What happens when people evolve in a different way?" They're a metaphor for the way we fear and hate people who are different from us and that has always been a powerful one. It was fun to explore in the comic book world because it's too nasty and saucy to deal with in real life. It's exciting to me to see how that plays out on our show, which may be different than how it plays out in the cinematic universe, or the way it's been done in the cool *Inhumans* comics and graphic novels.

**Will we see a shift in mission when the series returns with Coulson hiding Skye or even collecting more Inhumans?**

No, because god love him, Nick Fury gave Coulson an unachievable task: rebuild →



Skye may be superpowered, but she can still point a good old-fashioned gun.





Coulson is a man with a more taxing day job than most...

SHIELD, protect the world with very little resources and PS, everyone in the world wants to find you, kill you or arrest you. The amazing thing is all the stuff with the Kree race and the alien writing and the stuff with Skye is happening while he's trying to rebuild it. So it's a fun job for me as an actor, but it's a little rough to pull all of that out. Every time things go well and we seem to acquire some jets and cloaking technology suddenly we get our guts ripped out by losing one of our new core people like Agent Triplett. We basically live our TV show so BJ Britt is just as beloved as Trip on the show and we've all been a mess. When we come back we're all reeling after the mid-season finale. These characters haven't read the comics. We don't know what Skye is or who Daisy Johnson is. We don't know who Calvin Zabo is or that he's known as Mr Hyde. She could be a weapon or a friend. We walk back into what just happened. Who is she now?

#### Where is Coulson mentally in the second half of season two?

► I think we know that Coulson is called out, that he took the team [to the city] ostensibly for the legitimate reason of making sure Hydra couldn't get anyone into the [Terrigen] mists and transformed. He's also carrying this alien blood inside of him so who knows what directives he is following. I've been reading about insects that can get other insects to make nests for them and then die. Sometimes I worry, without knowing anything, if that might be what I'm doing. This whole season is about people who put aside a personal life to make protecting the world from the secrets they don't know about a number one priority. He has to deal with the fact that he is constantly putting the closest person in the world to him – as Skye is like a daughter – in great harm. He



Skye may be the most human Inhuman going.

doesn't quite understand when we come back what he has allowed to happen to her.

**Strong female characters are a hallmark of your show now with Skye, Agent May, Simmons and Mockingbird in the team. Is that a point of pride for you?**

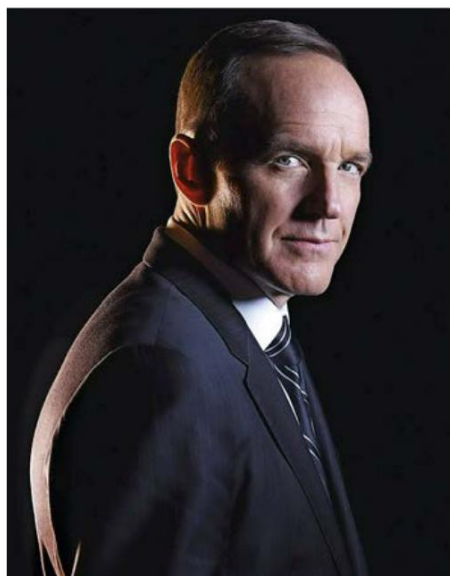
► The more that our world represents not just the world around us but a storyline that is about somebody who is different is very important to me. I have a 13-year-old daughter who suddenly is getting the best grades of her life and I think it's partly because of how she identifies with her surrogate big sister who is a

# "I'D LIKE TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT WITH THE AVENGERS"





Cook his head! On set japes with Chloe Bennet and Elizabeth Henstridge.



So Agent Coulson, where do you see yourself in five years' time...?

brilliant computer hacker [Skye] and her other surrogate big sister who is a computer scientist and bio tech agent played by Elizabeth Henstridge [Simmons]. The fact there are strong women in this is really important.

**During Phase One of the Marvel cinematic universe, Coulson was our connector character. Then we lost you in *The Avengers* but got you back on *SHIELD*...**

► I missed a whole Phase!

**How informed have you been about what might be coming for Coulson in the film world or overall with these crossovers?**

► Well, I feel like I am still within that universe

on the TV show. I get Sam [Jackson] and Lady Sif [Jaimie Alexander]. At the same time I feel we are starting a chain that moves in the other direction. I wouldn't be surprised if people on our show start to show up in the films. The thing I love most about being involved with Marvel is that they are trying to tell a giant story across mediums. And at some point I would like to make things right with the Avengers, who still think Coulson's dead.

**When it comes to upcoming narratives on the series, do you still prefer to not know what's coming?**

► They don't want to tell me and I don't want to know. It's hard because I know they know things about where this season is going that would just mess my head up but I only need to know what Coulson knows.

**As a fan of Marvel comics, what was your initial reaction about the Phase Three film roster and what excited you the most?**

► I've lived in California long enough that I am going to use the word stoked. There are characters I have been waiting for: Carol Danvers, Black Panther, Inhumans was a big thing for me. I loved *Guardians*. I can't believe how beautifully James Gunn, Chris Pratt and that whole cast pulled that off.

**What do you wish for Coulson by the end of the season?**

It's funny. I have a daughter and Skye is like my daughter. I mostly just wish that whatever this transformation is will leave her okay. I can wish for a safe happy world where everyone is accepted for who they are but it wouldn't make for very exciting TV! **SFX**

**Agents Of SHIELD will be returning to Channel 4 soon.**

## SKYE NEWS

Chloe Bennet talks Skye/  
Daisy Johnson/Quake...



**Skye's just been revealed as an Inhuman. What does that mean for her?**

► I think it's scary for Skye. She's hit with this [Terrigen] mist that gives her these powers. I don't think that right away she's aware she's even causing these earthquakes. The next part of the season will be about her discovering her newfound powers and dealing with them because she knows those with powers are put on the Index and treated a certain way. And she's terrified how it will affect her most precious relationship, with Coulson.

**Did you know this reveal was coming?**

► Since I was cast, every week I've emailed [the producers] questions like, "Am I this? Am I that? Am I SHIELD?" And they're always like, "No, just stop." About two weeks before I shot the winter break episode, I was doing my normal research and came across Daisy Johnson but they actually waited to tell me two days before I shot that.

**Skye has had the most dramatic arc on the show. Does it feel like a whirlwind for you to play as well?**

► I feel like I am going through [the changes] myself as Chloe... not that I have earthquake powers even though I did try the other day in traffic. I stuck my hand out and tried to make a car move. But overall it's all moved so fast for me and Skye that I don't actively think, "I'm changing." You organically discover. Playing her from the pilot episode to now she's completely different. We were saying the other day that Skye has matured faster than I have. It's been incredible.

**Could we see Skye/Daisy show up in the Marvel cinematic universe? There's an *Inhumans* movie coming...**

► It's not up to me but if it was, I would say yes. Let's make that happen!

Tara Bennett



# Claire North

The British author tells us about multiple personas and following up a bestseller

WORDS BY JONATHAN WRIGHT PORTRAIT BY WILL IRELAND

It's somehow appropriate that Claire North was somebody else the last time *SFX* spoke with her. That's because her new novel, *Touch*, is the tale of a body-hopping entity, Kepler, that jumps from human host to human host. "A friend of mine described it as *The Bourne Identity* but without the need for passports," says the writer.

But while Kepler, of whom more later, has "no identity of its own", things aren't quite so drastically weird when it comes to Claire North. Rather, this is the latest pen name of YA novelist and sometime theatre lighting designer Catherine Webb, aka urban fantasy scribbler Kate Griffin, author of novels starring Matthew Swift, London sorcerer. At this rate, it could eventually take a small encyclopaedia to log all her different identities.

"I hope so," she says as brightly as a winter cold will allow. "I hope, though, that the first names always begin with 'C' because I struggle to remember my own pseudonyms and it's at least some way of getting vaguely in the area. Claire North was a publisher's idea because I'd been Kate Griffin for a few years and then I accidentally wrote *Harry August*."

She's talking about a novel that was one of the breakout hits of 2014. *The First Fifteen Lives Of Harry August* revolves around a kalachakra, someone who lives the same life over and over. It was a book that grew from "a palate cleanser" short story and, initially, North was confused by her publisher's enthusiasm.

"I was still very much in an urban fantasy vein," she recalls. "I was like, 'Oh no, no, no, this was my accidental book, I'm still writing Kate Griffin.' They went, 'No, no, no, no, your accident is now your life.' Oh, okay, not the end of the world, but still like, 'Oh, I'll just re-gear my brain to that fact.'"

This involved getting her head around the idea of her book getting a huge marketing push. *Harry August* was a

Book Club choice for Waterstones, Richard and Judy, and Simon Mayo. "Two people from the publishing office came with me," she says of her appearance on Mayo's Radio 2 show. "It was lovely but I was like, 'Guys I'm happy to get myself there...'"

**"I was interested in the idea not just of identity theft, but the theft of a soul"**

Safe to say nobody from Orbit ever turned up when *SFX* interviewed North in her Kate Griffin iteration. So how does she react to her new profile and all the ballyhoo that surrounds being Claire North? "I'm aware that it's awesome, and I'm aware that sometimes people feed me cake when I go and do these things," she says, "but other than that I actually try quite consciously not to necessarily follow up on the commercial effects, if that makes sense, because I think I might become a monster if I do."

Not that she's ungrateful, it's more that being "an author with a capital 'A' brings out something terribly frightened in me". Her bloke, she adds, thinks she's "invested a huge amount of energy in this whole freelance, independence mentality". Which is rather admirable, but surely there was pressure to come up with another high-concept idea? North says she struggles with this term, and with labels such as literary. "I aim to come up with ideas that I think will be fun and interesting to tell," she says. Nevertheless, it's perhaps telling that she and her publishers knew the next Claire North book needed to be "like [*Harry North*] but different" and that all concerned "struggled for months to find out what that meant".

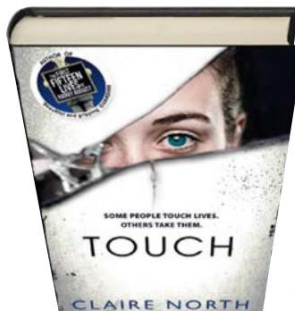
The answer turns out to be *Touch*. The spark for the book, she says, came from seeing people pass under lights and then disappear into the gloom while walking. This is reflected in the way that, in *Touch*, Kepler's hosts effectively blink out of existence temporarily when it takes control of their bodies.

"I was quite interested in the idea not just of identity theft, but almost the theft of a soul, the theft of a complete life," says North. "What are the moral implications of that, but also the psychological implications for the person doing the stealing? I think there's a lot out there about possession from the point of view of victims. But I couldn't think off the top of my head what it would be like to write from the point of view of someone who would be the possessor."

This is perhaps because this in itself poses technical challenges. "There was that danger of ending up with a character who's almost nothing, a character who having no physicality, having no family of its own has no definition or purpose of its own," says North. "Kepler gets round that by jumping into a body and then becoming not exactly obsessed, but completely immersed in what it thinks that body's identity should be."

It's just such challenges that can lead to a novelist getting "entangled" in a universe of what North jokingly calls "my art, my words, my art, my words". In part to head off this risk of becoming An Author, North continues to work in the theatre: "So that there can be that moment on a Sunday night, at 11pm, when I'm seven metres up a rickety ladder trying to rig something that weighs more than me with a director underneath going, 'Cat, do you think that's the right kind of red?' I'm like, 'Yes, this is good, this is putting my life in a certain kind of perspective that I need.'" **SFX**

*Touch* is on sale from Thursday 26 February.









**I**N 1932, DIRECTOR TOD (Dracula) Browning unveiled his horror epic *Freaks*, showcasing a troupe of sideshow performers who wreak horrific revenge on the people who wronged them. The film, which featured actors with real deformities, was considered too shocking for its time and banned from a UK release for 30 years.

Eight decades later, *American Horror Story* creator Ryan Murphy re-explored that terrifying territory in his show's chilling fourth season. *Freak Show* relocated Fox's small-screen horror to 1950s Florida, where a sideshow run by fading German entertainer Elsa Mars (Jessica Lange) must face obstacles such as ignorant locals, a killer clown and a pair of crooks trying to sell the freaks to a museum of oddities...

Unlike previous seasons, which mostly used members of the *AHS* rep company (playing different characters each season), *Freak Show* also cast actors with real-life conditions in lead roles. Make-up department head Eryn Krueger Mekash tells *SFX* the whole process began last year while she was working with Murphy on HBO movie *The Normal Heart*.

"Ryan already knew what he was going to be doing this season," says Krueger Mekash, speaking from location in Louisiana, during production of the season's final episode. "So he was asking, 'How do you think we can do this?' He wanted Sarah Paulson to play the two-headed lady, who was based on two real-life girls named Violet and Daisy [Hilton], who were sideshow performers joined at the hip, so that's where we started.

"As we progressed to springtime, Ryan was still fine-tuning his plans as to who was doing what. He wanted certain actors to be in the show, so Angela Bassett became the three-breasted lady, and he wanted Evan Peters to play Jimmy the Lobster Claw Boy, so there were certain actors from his 'repertory company' he wanted to use.

"We were going to get the world's tallest man, but everyone fell in love with Erika Ervin, so they changed it to the world's tallest woman. Mat Fraser who plays the Seal Boy was a performer already, and of course Ryan wanted to bring Naomi Grossman back as Pepper and tie that storyline together with her appearance in season two. They also brought in Chris Nieman who plays Salty, so it was fun getting to flesh out all those make-ups."

Looking back over her team's work on *Freak Show*, Krueger Mekash believes it may be the strongest season of *American Horror Story* so far. "Ryan Murphy is the ultimate boss as far as respecting practical effects and period make-up," she declares, "and letting me make sure that the make-ups are shot the right way. I couldn't be more thrilled about being on this show."

# GET YOUR

★  
Roll up!  
Roll up! Discover  
the make-up secrets  
of *American Horror  
Story* as Joe Nazzaro  
dares to enter the  
*Freak Show*...  
★



# FREAKS ON!

## SALTY AND PEPPER, THE PINHEADS!

"Pepper was actually introduced in season two, so the new make-up by AFX is done in a similar style, but more youthful because it's ten years earlier. Mike Mekash, who does her make-up this season, has done a younger paint job, and the prosthetics have been completely re-sculpted by Dave Anderson and his team, so it's a set of ears, a one-piece brow and nose, hand-punched eyebrows, a set of teeth and a contact lens that gives her the odd look that Schlitzie the original pinhead in the Tod Browning movie looked like.

"Pepper has big, thick hands and arms to give her a more hulking appearance, because Naomi Grossman is a small actress. In the first episode of the season, we also had a freak orgy, so Naomi had to wear a full prosthetic chest and body piece that looked amazing.

"Chris Neiman, who plays Salty, already had big hairy arms, and he has the same make-up: a brow piece, nose, hand-punched eyebrows, contact lens, ears and teeth. Naomi's teeth are pretty wild, but Chris' teeth are really wonky." ➔

Salty in the make-up chair.



We saw an older version of Pepper in season two, *Asylum*.





## ★ TWISTY THE CLOWN!

"The character was inspired by a Lon Chaney film that Ryan had a picture from. He said, 'I want the character to look like this!' but John Carroll Lynch plays a gross, super-dirty version of that character."

"John's scalp was painted to look decayed, and underneath his mask, AFX did a beautiful sculpture of John's face that had been destroyed by a shotgun blast, and Fuse FX, who does our visual effects, came in and animated it. John ended up doing a voiceover for the scenes where Edward Mordrake helps him to speak. Mike Mekash and Chris Nelson did the day-to-day Twisty make-up, including the flashbacks where he plays an innocent clown who just wants to make kids happy. I'm sure there are other actors who could have brought something to that character, but John is the only one who could have played it that well."



Something to smile about.



Well if you didn't have a clown phobia before...

## ★ DESIREE DUPREE, THE THREE-BREADED HERMAPHRODITE! ★

"When Ryan Murphy said that Angela was going to play Desiree, I heard she couldn't wait to get in there and get her chest cast done. Her chest started out as silicone, which ended up being a little too heavy especially for the weather, so we ended up changing it to foam during the first week of shooting, so she was much more comfortable with it. Angela doesn't have to wear it all the time, so sometimes we glue on a partial piece with the costuming that comes up a little higher, and that gives her a break from the big prosthetic every day. I glue the whole piece on her, and because I'm usually doing several other cast members, she goes to Mike Mekash and Chris Nelson who finish the edging and the rest of the painting. Chris pre-paints all the pieces, so it takes about an hour and a half to get her breasts on."



Foam breasts: much more user friendly than silicone.



## BETTE AND DOT, THE TWO-HEADED GIRL!

"With Sarah Paulson's character(s), we have to shoot everything not twice but four times. I do full motion-capture dots on Sarah's neck, and we shoot her with and without green screen, individual shots and 'overs' while she wears the animatronic head. It's quite complicated, but Sarah always knows exactly where the camera has to go. She wears an 'earwig' to hear the dialogue she's already recorded, but we often have an actor standing off-camera doing the other character's lines.

"A lot of the master shots and over the shoulder shots are done with the puppet head. Even her wardrobe has a large neck for each head, so each head sits further out on Sarah's shoulders with the clothes designed to support the shoulders. When she shoots each side, the shoulder portion of the costume comes down, so it's all a very intricate dance."



Two heads are better than one, right?

Maybe a Pan Galactic Gargle Blaster would cheer her up.

That style of collar and waistband was never going to flatter.



The dress is attached to the fat suit to make it easier to remove.



## IMA WIGGLES!

"Chrissy Metz wears a fat suit made of beautiful soft foam, which goes all the way over her feet, so it's all-encompassing. Ryan didn't want to incorporate any prosthetics, which I agreed with, because fat make-ups can be very cumbersome. Chrissy is always showing us how she can't cross her legs with the fat suit on, which she calls 'the couch'. She also wears a cooling vest underneath it, which is like a tropical environment inside it.

"The dress is incorporated into the fat suit so the whole thing can be unzipped in one go to give Chrissy some air. She's a plus-sized lady, but the suit gives her an extra 250 pounds, so it's a huge suit, built by AFX. Dave Anderson has an Oscar for working with Rick Baker on *The Nutty Professor*, so he's been at the forefront of that technology."

Time for that wafer-thin mint.





## ★ PAUL THE ILLUSTRATED SEAL! ★

"Dave Anderson created the tattoos for Paul, and Mike Mekash, who's a genius at this stuff, figured out where the pieces should be cut and where they should go. He is a puzzle mastermind as far as that stuff goes. Ryan knew he wanted Paul to be tattooed, so his front is like an Escher painting, while his back has seal flippers that go all the way down his backside. Ryan also wanted the skeleton hands, so those were the concepts we started with."

"There were originally five or six different versions of the tattoos, some of which covered his face and certain parts of his body, while others just covered his shoulders. We did all kinds of designs, and Dave kept coming up with new ones, so I would get a new email with five new designs until Ryan finally decided what he wanted to see on camera. I think all three departments - make-up, hair and wardrobe - really came together to come up with a cool character."

Paul is covered with tattoos all over his body - except his face.



Mat Fraser has previously acted as Seal the Seal Boy, a real-life freak show performer.

This isn't going to end well.



Ryan Murphy wanted the skeleton tattoos on Paul's hands from the start.

## ★ JIMMY DARLING THE LOBSTER BOY! ★

"Jimmy's hands were based on photos of real people with ectrodactyly. We initially talked about doing animatronic hands but they just looked too big, so we ended up scaling them back. Fractured FX did several versions, including an initial set made of silicone, but we ended up going with foam gloves that were much easier for Evan to wear in the heat. I wanted to give Evan a ruddy skin tone, because his character runs the compound and is in the sun a lot, so I wanted him to have a lot of sun exposure so his make-up had that element, as well as his hands and arms. I think it takes Chris Nelson an hour and a half altogether for his hand prosthetics as well as face and body make-up." **SFX**

Working with family can be a tricky business.





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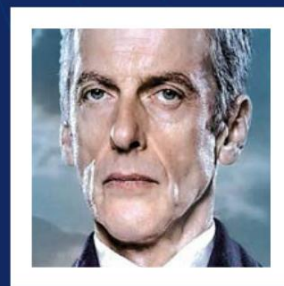


*10 years of new Who!*

SONG

FOR

TEN



**DOCTOR WHO** returned to our screens ten years ago – and became a phenomenon. Let's look back and celebrate...





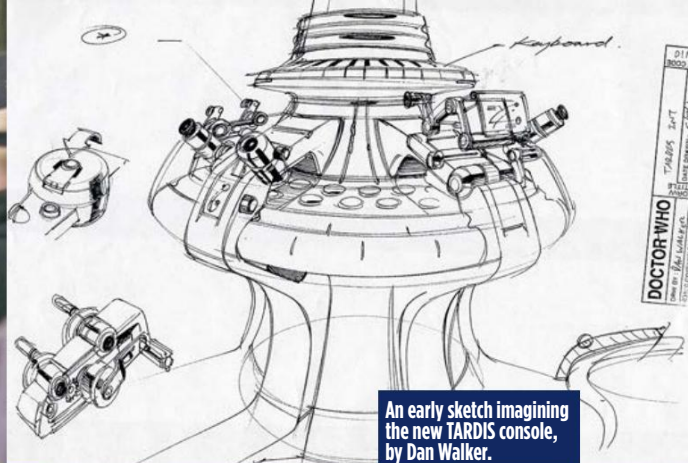
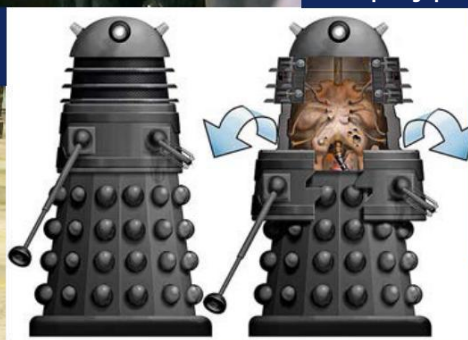




Below: Matthew Savage's sketches for a Dalek opening up.



Who'd have thought the Mox of Balhoon would be a tracksuit wearer?



An early sketch imagining the new TARDIS console, by Dan Walker.



Eve Myles is about to go super spooky filming "The Unquiet Dead".

# "D'you want to come with me?"

**IT'S A DECADE** since a crop-haired man in a battered leather jacket demanded an answer to that question. A decade since *Doctor Who* reclaimed its status as the star player of British SF, reborn as appointment television after years of culty oblivion. A decade in which Saturdays finally made sense again.

Ten years. Four (five? Six?) Doctors. Six (seven? Eight? Nine?) companions. 117 episodes. 5,661 minutes (give or take Tardisodes, minisodes, *Torchwood*, *The Sarah Jane Adventures*, *Doctor Who Confidential*, the occasional Proms and the odd wobble in the space-time continuum). *SFX* has been there all the way, from a thrillingly unexpected email from Russell T Davies, the day before the official announcement of the show's return – "*Doctor Who*. It's coming back! It's me!" – to the moment we stepped through the battered blue doors of the Twelfth Doctor's TARDIS (it's Welsher on the inside...).

We've plundered our archive of interviews to present this, the story of *Doctor Who*'s second chance: the gambles, the victories, the bruises. It's told by the people who made it, at the time they made it, before it all fossilised into history. Some of it's surprisingly unguarded. All of it's honest. These are despatches from the TV frontline.

As the Doctor promised us, it's "The trip of a lifetime."



## RUSSELL T DAVIES

■ "I don't want to do a send-up. A real, full-blooded drama, that's what I want to do. Make you laugh, make you cry... It's got to be well-written, it's got to be fun, it's got to be exciting, it's got to be accessible."

SFX 111 DECEMBER 2003

## RUSSELL T DAVIES

■ "I doubt it's going to be a Year Zero. No one's even mentioned that. I don't see the need for a complete reboot. However, the marvellous thing is that anything can happen. I might write that first script and decide that Year Zero is the only thing that can make a new series work. Right now, every option is open."

SFX 111 DECEMBER 2003

## JULIE GARDNER, EXEC PRODUCER

■ "I'm thrilled Christopher [Eccleston] will be the new Doctor. Christopher is, first and foremost, a wonderful actor. He's energetic, passionate, professional and instinctive. And there's an added bonus now the news is out – I'll be able to go to parties again without being chased around the room for a casting scoop!"

SFX 117 MAY 2004

## RUSSELL T DAVIES

■ "Looking back it seems as though Billie [Piper] was the obvious choice right from the start. Let's face it, if



## THINKING INSIDE THE BOX

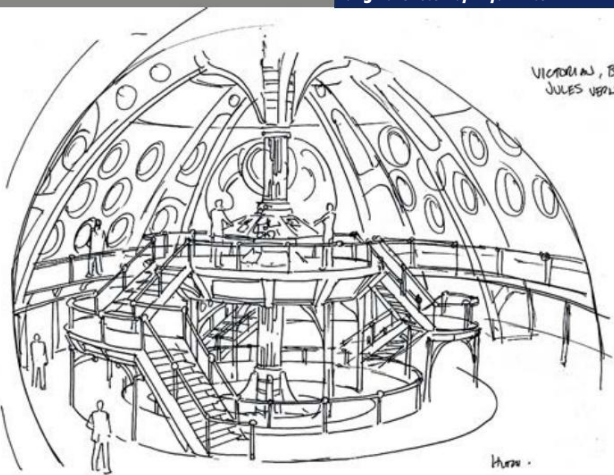
SFX had a small but crucial role in *Doctor Who*'s resurrection. In 2004 we played matchmaker, putting hotshot comic artist Bryan Hitch in touch with Russell T Davies. Hitch became *Who*'s official concept artist and, in collaboration with production designer Edward Thomas, dreamed a new TARDIS for the 21st century...

"The cool thing we all wanted to talk about was what the TARDIS interior would look like," Hitch recalls, a decade on. "Well, that's not exactly true. We knew it had to look like the TARDIS or be recognisably the same thing, we just didn't know how far we could go in making it fresh. We all adored the TV movie set but knew we couldn't afford anything like that, unfortunately. This was all new territory for the BBC: they'd made *Doctor Who* on a shoestring for so long and they wanted this to stand up against the best of US SF TV but the bridge of the Enterprise cost millions and we had half a sixpence and a pickled egg.

"There was, for a while, a very serious conversation about not having a TARDIS interior, leaving it as a mystery, but we pressed ahead with the idea of designing one anyway. A *huge* one. Sixpence can go a long way, after all.

"My first thought before I ever met RTD was 'A big dome and several levels with the console in the centre of the room'. That's a thought that's stayed through pretty much each version so far and even though the warehouse originally used for the first studio meant we had to lose the underside and mezzanine levels, it's brilliant that the current version was able to do all that we couldn't. Inspired by the work of architect Santiago Calatrava, that first TARDIS set, for all its compromises, is still my favourite and seeing it as a museum piece in the great *Doctor Who* Experience was a true bittersweet experience. Ten years. How wonderful!" **Nick Setchfield**

Niel Bushnell's computer rendering of a vision for the TARDIS, and (below) original sketch by Bryan Hitch.



Dan Walker's sketch of the new sonic screwdriver.



you're casting a young British woman in a lead role then Billie's the hottest name around. And *Doctor Who* got her! But none of us would ever cast someone simply because of hype – and I'm sure Billie would've seen through us in a second. In fact, it was odd, meeting Billie for the first time; the tabloids had already touted her name but we were all strangers to each other!"

SFX 120 AUGUST 2004

### RUSSELL T DAVIES

"In the very first draft of the script, I made reference to a leather jacket, just as a vague suggestion, but after that I just left it to Lucinda Wright, our costume designer, and Doctor Who himself. And I love it – that jacket looks battered, lived-in, comfortable, and a bit sexy too. I gather some fans are up in arms about this. Bless. Tell them to put their arms down. Too late."

SFX 122 OCTOBER 2004

### RUSSELL T DAVIES

"You can't fall into the trap of thinking the whole nation opens its arms to science fiction. You automatically know the first episode is going to be about Rose and how she meets the Doctor. So you know that in the first 30 seconds she's going to get a scare and something science fictiony is going to happen. But I know that if the science fiction thing had been a tentacle there would have been people thinking, 'Oh, that's daft', and turn over. So there was no choice about it being the Autons.

You think oh, I could invent something like that, but it wouldn't be as good. You don't have to have seen *Doctor Who* before but everyone looks at a china doll and finds it creepy."

SFX 128 MARCH 2005

### RUSSELL T DAVIES

"Christopher Eccleston watched 'The Talons Of Weng-Chiang' and he came back and said, 'Wow, Tom Baker's so brilliant!'"

SFX 129 APRIL 2005

### RUSSELL T DAVIES

"You're not going to be scared by an alien face any more because they're on at five o'clock on a Sunday afternoon on *Andromeda* or *Stargate*. There are a million of them. In the old days of *Doctor Who*, that was it."

SFX 129 APRIL 2005

### RUSSELL T DAVIES

"It's going out on a Saturday night and that is a lively, fast, colourful slot. That's why I don't give a fuck what anyone thinks about the logo, it's brilliant when it's flying at the screen. It's big and bold and huge dramatically. It's almost over the top. That's where we're playing. We're not 9pm on BBC Two."

SFX 129 APRIL 2005

### CHRISTOPHER ECCLESTON

"There were thousands of texts and emails between myself and Russell T Davies during

the making of it. In an early one, Russell said, 'How are you getting on playing this? Because I'm finding it very difficult to write.' Then he said, '...because he's just *in the moment*, isn't he?' And I thought: 'That's what I'm gonna be: eternally in the moment.'"

SFX 131 JUNE 2005

### CHRISTOPHER ECCLESTON

"You cannot have a life. You can't socialise. It's like having a TARDIS in your skull and every time you open your mouth you see a TARDIS. There were days when I got psoriasis, I got eczema. My face blew up in the Dalek episode – I looked literally disfigured with tiredness."

SFX 131 JUNE 2005

### SIMON PEGG

"Chris is a particular kind of actor and perhaps the full implications of the role didn't hit him until after the fact and it freaked him out. It's understandable."

SFX 131 JUNE 2005

### RUSSELL T DAVIES

"Isn't it lovely? To see it working? Did you ever think you'd see the day? How many people were expecting it to fail? We need to hold on to that new audience and not take them for granted. Let's face it, if they introduce a Saturday *Coronation Street*, and that's not such a mad idea, then we're in trouble."

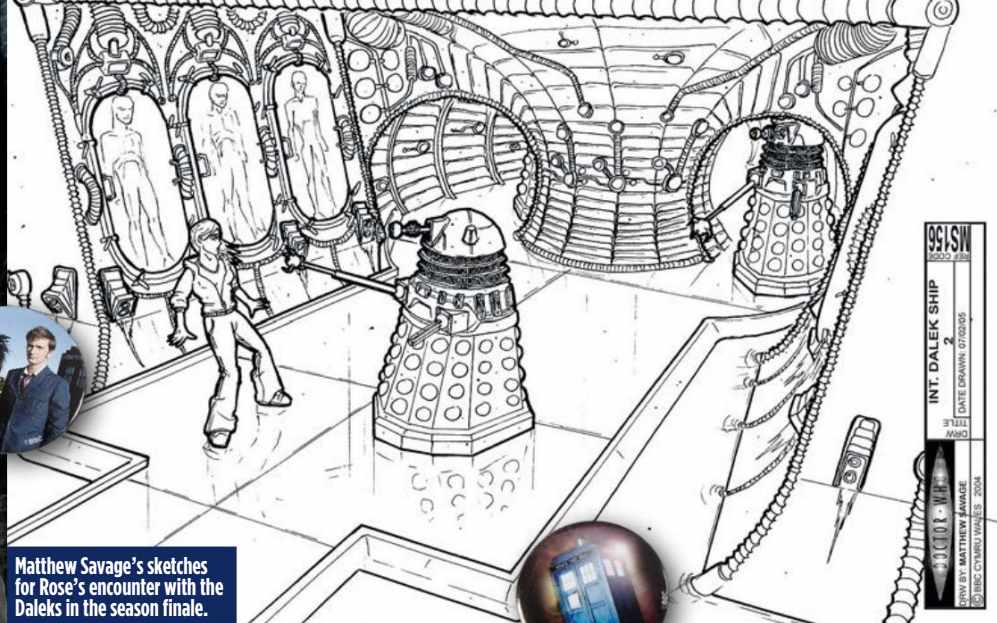
SFX 132 JULY 2005 →



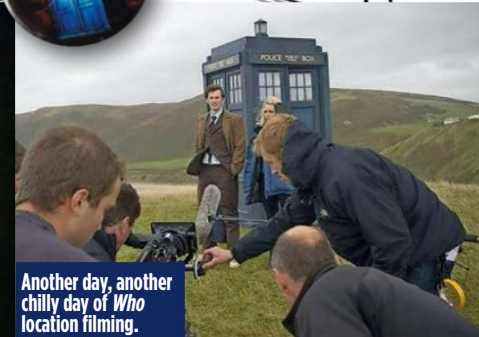




SFX brought Verity Lambert and Russell T Davies together!



Matthew Savage's sketches for Rose's encounter with the Daleks in the season finale.



Another day, another chilly day of *Who* location filming.



## RUSSELL T DAVIES

■ "What type of stories do we want to tell in the second series? Big lesbian mime stories." SFX 132 JULY 2005



## STEVEN MOFFAT

■ "First time I saw [David Tennant] was in *Blackpool*. Emailed Russell, said, 'There's Doctor Ten'. Before you think I'm clever, Russell replied - wearily, I think - 'You're not the first person to say that. In fact, you're the fourth.'" SFX 132 JULY 2005



## RUSSELL T DAVIES

■ "We never would have brought back Sarah Jane and K-9 in the first year. It would have sent out the wrong signals, saying this is a nostalgia piece. But since we had a second season that was the one thing I had the absolute confidence to do." SFX 142 APRIL 2006



## DAVID TENNANT

■ "What I realised when I came to do this was that any sort of fantastic notions one might have had about this were just that - fantastic notions. When you have to come and make real decisions about it,

it's a different thing. Actors often say that the best bit about getting a job is the phone call that says you've got it, because at that moment it is all potential, and it could be anything." SFX 143 MAY 2006

## DAVID TENNANT

■ "Is thin in? Well, that's what I bring so they were kind of stuck with that. So we thought we might as well make a virtue of it rather than fight against it. I've always been a skinny streak of piss so we might as well accept that. Certainly wearing the Converse with [the suit] was something I was adamant on since day one. Lots of people thought it was a terrible idea but I thought it would take the curse off wearing a suit. It stops it looking like 'man in suit', which can be a bit imposing. The thing about the Doctor is that flash of anarchy that goes through him." SFX 143 MAY 2006

## DAVID TENNANT

■ "[The Doctor and Rose] is a love story without the shagging!" SFX 143 MAY 2006

## RUSSELL T DAVIES

■ "I'd done a lot of juggling in my head, thinking 'Beware of the path you're going down that wanders away from the path you should be on', which is to get darker; look at the end of 'Doomsday', which is the saddest scene ever, or the Doctor murdering the

children of the Rachnoss, which is very, very dark. But you can exclude viewers if you don't remember the original path you were on. So I lightened it a bit. I said, 'Let's not keep going down that tragic hero path.'" SFX 155 APRIL 2007

## RUSSELL T DAVIES

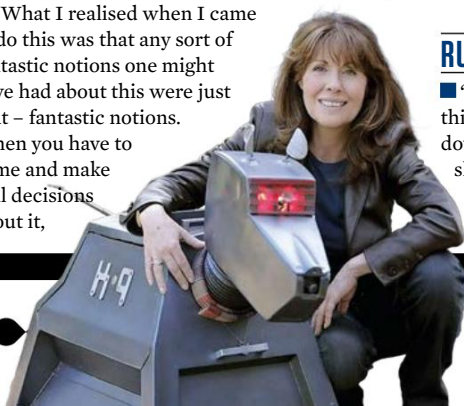
■ "I could have made [the new companion] an alien, or another Time Lady but for now - while I'm here, I suspect - the format is: modern-day woman. There was half a day when Martha could have been a Victorian lady, because I loved the way that Madame de Pompadour [from series two's 'The Girl In The Fireplace'] understood the Doctor's world. [BBC Head of Fiction] Jane Tranter's face when I ran that past her! 'No,' she said, and she's right. We've got all these little girls watching who are hooked on it, so hopefully they'll be the same with Martha." SFX 155 APRIL 2007

## FREEMA AGYEMAN

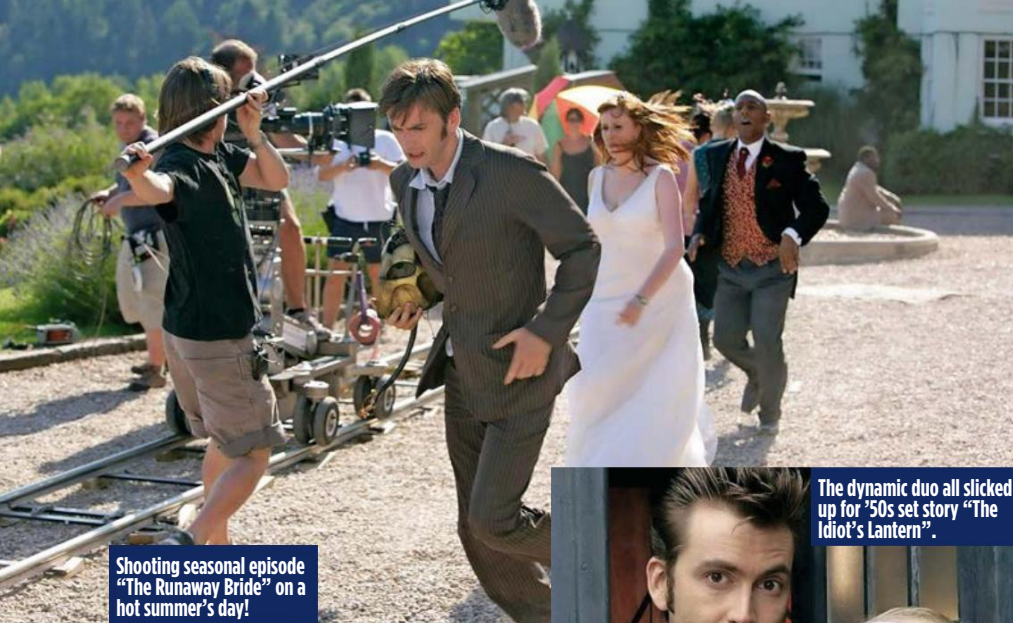
■ "When I found out that I'd got the job I thought 'Right, I'd better get up to speed with my *Doctor Who* knowledge. I just remember putting it into the internet and it all went BANG! There's no way you can cram all that!" SFX 156 MAY 2007

## RUSSELL T DAVIES

■ "The doubts about [Catherine Tate], as far as I can see, are fundamentally stupid. They







Shooting seasonal episode "The Runaway Bride" on a hot summer's day!



Getting festive again for "The Next Doctor".



The dynamic duo all slicked up for '50s set story "The Idiot's Lantern".



Autographs for the kids during a break on "The Sontaran Strategem" in Cardiff.



Shush, they're filming "Silence In The Library"!

say she's going to shout her way through the whole thing. They say she shouted her way through 'The Runaway Bride'. No, she didn't. Literally, factually, no matter of opinion, no, she did not. And it ended with what I think is one of the most beautiful scenes we've ever shot, with the two of them in the snow outside the TARDIS. So how do I even begin to engage with that? I'm all for opinions, and I don't mind when people don't like stuff, but you're talking about opinions that are literally, factually wrong. It's grist for the mill for the tabloids. But they've gone into that knocking *Doctor Who* phase anyway, which is completely natural. It's what happens when you're successful."

SFX 168 APRIL 2008

## RUSSELL T DAVIES

"You're heading towards death, actually. Does [the Doctor] want to die? No one wants to die. Outside the show the viewers all know that he's going to die. So that's rather marvellous, actually, to be able to feed that in. I can't wait to see David act some of that stuff; I haven't seen it before and I don't know how it's going to work, because it's brand new. Oh god, I can't wait to write it! I'll be so happy!"

SFX 181 APRIL 2009

## DAVID TENNANT

"I was determined not to get upset. But I cried a little bit against all expectations [laughs]."

SFX 189 DECEMBER 2009

## RUSSELL T DAVIES

"Writing's always hard, let's be honest, but when it came to the final moments, the final scenes, I was flying. In my head I had it all planned, the food I'd eat and the music I'd play. I thought I'd be dancing on my balcony. And then when it gets to it, it's not like that at all. You finish it, you send it off, there's some problem at work that day, something else happens, you watch *Coronation Street*, everything's normal. I'd really built it up for years in my head, thinking how exciting that day would be, but life just carries on, doesn't it [laughs]? Does 2005 feel like a long time ago for me? It feels like a million years."

SFX 191 FEBRUARY 2010

## STEVEN MOFFAT

"One of the things that *Doctor Who* has done throughout its life is to periodically, and with no particular reason other than the sheer hell of it, completely renew itself. It's not a coincidence that a show that's done that has lasted for 40 odd years, because that's how you survive. You survive by change for change's sake."

SFX 193 APRIL 2010

## STEVEN MOFFAT

"I took a long time to say yes. I've got things I will now never, ever write because *Doctor Who* is such a blizzard. I think it would have been a very, very difficult thing to say no to, and you would worry when you were an old

man, wouldn't you? You might think that you'd accidentally lived somebody else's life if you'd said no."

SFX 194 MAY 2010

## MATT SMITH

"The fact that I'm younger, the fact that my soul is different, my energy's different, my history's different, will all add to a different sort of Doctor. It's a part that allows for everything, every facet of you to be revealed. I hope it'll be rich and plentiful, but it's not something that I have analysed enough to have a definitive 'He's this or that or the other'. Because he's changing every day for me."

SFX 194 MAY 2010

## STEVEN MOFFAT

"You just think, 'Yes, he's going to be one of the people that get to play Doctor Who, isn't he? I always think he's a kind of Bo' *Selecta* caricature of a handsome man – we insult each other all the time, it's fine! He's strikingly handsome but he's like a cartoon of handsome with his big sweep of hair! The first time he came in, that's what he looked like, and you just think, 'You're the Doctor, you are.'"

SFX 194 MAY 2010

## KAREN GILLAN

"[Amy and the Doctor] have this really strong, dynamic relationship, these two people who really combust when they meet. A romantic side of it is really not the driving





# DOCTOR WHO



Matt Smith's debut festive episode, the snowy "A Christmas Carol".



Heading stateside to film season six opener "The Impossible Astronaut".



A trio of young folk making "The Eleventh Hour".



Get yourself ready Matt, you're about to chow down on fish fingers and custard.



force of their relationship, and that would never be the main reason that they're together. I think ultimately they're just these two people of the same kind, who are both adventurers and lost souls who find each other."

SFX 196 JULY 2010



## MATT SMITH

■ "The Doctor is a constant reference, every day. When I'm getting stressed about something, about a phone call or an email or whatever, I think, 'God, just try and be more like him... Try and approach your life like him.' And try to be kind to people, be nice to people. He always gives people a chance. And I really have learnt a lot about myself from playing him, because when you spend time with someone who's so good, and thinking in those patterns and those ways – because that's what you do as an actor – eventually you start to develop thoughts and that's when you know it's working, because the thoughts start to occur of their own accord. So I'll be doing a scene on set, and I'll be learning my lines, and I'll be having thoughts that I'm not controlling, that are just happening... Doctor-thoughts... and it's cooking. That's when you know."

SFX 203 JANUARY 2011



## MATT SMITH

■ "There's no other job in the world, no other part, where you get to walk into a room like you're a piece of velvet. Or Mr Soft or something. Everyone else would go, 'Why is James Bond walking like he's nuts?' But the

Doctor gets away with it, because his energy's so mad and manic, and anything goes. How wonderful it is to be able to go into the middle of a room and walk quite oddly. It's such a privilege to play him."

SFX 208 JUNE 2011

## STEVEN MOFFAT

■ "Don't you think it's quite good that television forces you to shut up and pay attention? And no, you shouldn't be bloody tweeting during it..."

SFX 213 OCTOBER 2011

## STEVEN MOFFAT

■ "Any of the companions must have a finite life within *Doctor Who*. They can't become part of it. I miss the fact that Karen and Arthur aren't around, that just feels strange. When we all started on it together it felt like the future had finally arrived. You don't expect the future to become the past, you don't expect it to become something that you're now nostalgic about."

SFX 226 OCTOBER 2012

## JENNA COLEMAN

■ "Matt always said it's about physically finding our rhythm. It's a more choreographed show than anything I've ever worked on. In a way the whole thing is like a dance, and the moment we started dancing together and finding that rhythm is when it worked."

SFX 233 MAY 2013

## STEVEN MOFFAT

■ "It's very rare in *Doctor Who* that the story happens to the Doctor. It happens to people around him, and he helps out – he's the hero figure who rides in and saves everybody from the story of the week. He is not the story of the week. In this, he is the story of the week. This is The Day Of The Doctor. This is his most important day. His most important moment. This is the one he'll remember."

SFX 241 DECEMBER 2013

## STEVEN MOFFAT

■ "Peter [Capaldi] said: 'This is all I've ever wanted, this is huge for me. I just want to be Doctor Who.' You need someone who cherishes it, who loves it and will take it as seriously, if not more seriously, than anything else."

SFX 243 FEBRUARY 2014

## PETER CAPALDI

■ "Sometimes I can't get to sleep at night because I'm excited about what I'm going to do! I always feel slightly guilty that I'm allowed so much fun at this point in my life. It's very challenging – there's a lot of it to do, but it's the best gig in the world."

SFX 252 OCTOBER 2014 SFX







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# THE FLY II

IT WAS THE SEQUEL THAT GOT SWATTED. CALUM WADDELL PICKS THE WINGS OFF GRUESOME SHOCKER *THE FLY II*...

**I**N THE 1980S VIRTUALLY any fright-flick that earned back its money was deemed worthy of a franchise. From the likes of *Friday The 13th* and *A Nightmare On Elm Street* to the cheapjack straight-to-video likes of *Sleepaway Camp* and *Slumber Party Massacre*, horror-hounds had a hard time keeping up with each new series. Consequently, when David Cronenberg finally broke into the A-list with his unexpected summer smash *The Fly* back in 1986 it was only a matter of time before Jeff Goldblum's creepy-crawly classic gained its own gore-laden legacy.

Unfortunately, 1989's *The Fly II* remains one of the decade's less remembered follow-up features – a rare example of a major studio shocker that notched up a widespread release but failed to attract much fan enthusiasm. Perhaps the main reason for this lukewarm reception is down to the fact that few of the original players returned, giving the sequel something of a “B-movie” feel. Indeed, whereas Cronenberg was, and remains, a respected “auteur”, *The Fly II* was an entity which gave a special effects wizard a chance at taking the helm of a highly anticipated movie.

“It all happened quite quickly,” begins Chris Walas, who had nabbed an Academy Award for

his outstanding work on Cronenberg's groundbreaking first film three years earlier. “I had a good relationship with Stuart Cornfeld, the producer of *The Fly*, and he knew I had hopes of moving into directing. So *The Fly II* was floating around in limbo at Fox because Cronenberg had decided not to come back. When that happened, Stuart was kind enough to put my name into the running – although he never told me this because he didn't want to disappoint me [laughs]. This meant that I was left out of everything until one day I got a random phone call from him and he told me: ‘Do you still want to make a movie? You see, I just got you the job of taking on *The Fly II*.’ No one was more surprised than me.



“Fox, the studio behind *The Fly*, knew exactly what they wanted from a sequel,” continues Walas. “They had an agenda and I don't think they were looking at how to push the concept to the next level. Basically, they wanted to make a date-night movie. So the general consensus was that *The Fly II* had to have enough special effects and gore to keep the male teens happy but also provide a nice love story for their young girlfriends. Of course, in Cronenberg's movie the core of the narrative was this very adult, and effective, relationship between Jeff Goldblum and Geena Davis – it was a really powerful romance. But with the sequel we were moving beyond all of that and turning the series, conceptually, into a more straightforward monster movie.”

*The Fly II* – launched with the ominous poster slogan “Like father, like son” – begins with the birth of Martin Brundle, the spawn of Geena Davis and Jeff Goldblum from the original flick. Martin Brundle, whose mother dies in labour, is immediately adopted by Bartok Industries (headed by a sneering sadist, well played by the late character actor Lee Richardson). Bartok is revealed to have backed Brundle's initial ill-fated experiments into teleportation – and his troubled son is kept under the scrutiny of medical professionals. ➔

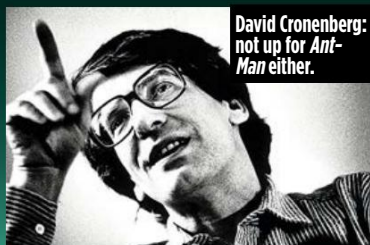






# FLY AND FLY AGAIN

Rumours abounded for years that Cronenberg himself would return with a new update of *The Fly*. Described by the man himself as "more of a sequel or a sidebar" in a 2012 interview with *IndieWire*, Canada's greatest living auteur admitted that Fox ultimately opted to squash the project when the budget began to buzz a little louder than they were comfortable with. "At the end of the day, money makes the film world go round," bemoaned the filmmaker.



David Cronenberg: not up for *Ant-Man* either.

Thanks to his father's insect DNA, Brundle Jr is ageing at a rapid rate (and turning into '80s heartthrob Eric Stoltz) although he retains a genius IQ, rapid-fire reflexes and superhuman strength. Moreover, when he reaches adulthood he attracts the fancy of a beautiful raven-haired young scientist (played by genre veteran Daphne Zuniga). Together they endeavour to find a cure for the macabre condition while the white coats in the laboratory attempt to study, and replicate, the teleportation abilities his dad created in the first movie.

## MANGLED HOUND

Such experimentation leads to a memorably nasty moment in which a golden retriever is placed within the mutative Brundle Telepods...

"There's definitely an anti-abuse theme running under the sequel," adds Walas. "Not just with the treatment of animals in science labs but also with the abuse of humans in our everyday world. You can definitely see a thread in *The Fly II* about how soulless big businesses pit themselves against everyday people and how that desire for profit frequently trumps basic humanity. But, on a purely plot level, the scene in which they put the dog through the Telepods – only for it to come out in a

disjointed form – was in there to emphasise how evil the character of Bartok really is. This is a guy who runs a huge company and yet he lacks any sort of decency. He tells Martin Brundle that his beloved dog died peacefully when, in fact, he has put it through a horrible experiment and the poor creature is now living in great pain in a cold cell. Of course, because most people – rightly – hate to see a dog in discomfort that is a sequence where I managed to upset practically everyone [laughs]."

While *The Fly* had been a loose adaptation of familiar source material, namely George Langelaan's pulpy 1957 short story and the subsequent 1958 Vincent Price film, the sequel bore little resemblance to any previous entry in this loose monster-mythology. This meant that a completely fresh, but vaguely canonical, story was needed. Initially this was provided by future *Masters Of Horror* producer Mick Garris, who, at the recommendation of Cronenberg himself, attempted to tackle more adult themes of abortion and religion with a screenplay that was ultimately rejected. A subsequent script was delivered by brothers Ken and Jim Wheat, who would later gain fame for their work on the *Riddick* series. All three names are credited in the final production of *The Fly II*, although it was down to a future Hollywood A-lister to really



Some Christmas presents are better than others...



Eric Stoltz soon loses his film star good looks.



Well, that's one way to keep a floor polished.





Could even a mother love this baby?



Don't get in the big thing behind you, just don't.

## EARLY BUZZ

Made just a year after the short story premiered, 1958's *The Fly* is a rare example of a horror romp from the monochrome era that was shot in full Cinemascope. The end result might look hokey today but it still carries plenty of charm and remains a pleasant slice of schlocky escapism. The sequel, *Return Of The Fly*, rushed out the following year, continues the story of scientific irresponsibility and humanoid-insects - with genre regular Brett Halsey turning into an especially unlikely oddity. The flop third instalment, 1965's *Curse Of The Fly*, took some time to arrive and is only vaguely related to its predecessors. Expect more camp than chaos.



Vincent Price in need of fly spray in the original.

metamorphose this splatter-packed pot-boiler into something more multiplex-worthy...

"Frank Darabont came onboard and he did a fantastic job of pulling the script together in a very short period of time," admits Walas. "I really loved collaborating with Frank and he only had some very basic story guidelines from me to work with. At one point we were hoping that we would get Geena Davis back for the sequel so we wrote her character into the screenplay. Initially she was going to be at the beginning, and we would see her give birth before she passed away. Unfortunately that didn't happen. We couldn't work out a way to get Jeff Goldblum back, of course, because he was dead at the end of the first movie [laughs] but I was thrilled when we convinced John Getz to do a cameo. He had, of course, played Geena Davis's former lover in the Cronenberg film so we had a sense of continuity there."

## GORY NASTINESS

Made in the days when CGI was a glimmer in the eye of an adventurous animator or two, *The Fly II* is, if anything, even gorier than Cronenberg's own stomach-churning trendsetter. Aside from the notoriously nasty sequence of a mangled mutt, the new Brundle transformation from man to mutant is effectively uneasy while a gruesome gag involving some poor schmuck having his head slowly squished under a moving elevator won Walas some censorship problems. Initially

## IT MADE HALF WHAT *THE FLY* ACHIEVED

slapped with a commercially disastrous X rating by the MPAA (the American censor board) the director had to drastically reduce the red stuff in order to gain a theatrically suitable R rating.

"The MPAA is an odd organisation in that there does not seem to be, even to this day, any hard and fast rules as to what constitutes each rating," reflects Walas. "*The Fly II*, like *The Fly*, was considered an outright horror film - and, to be fair, I think the MPAA is much more lenient toward gruesomeness in a 'fantasy' movie than it is towards violence in other genres. I think other movies were having more ratings problems than us at the time, so I was actually quite pleased when a lot of the great make-up work made it through unscathed."

Inevitably, a major challenge was designing the title character itself...

"The *Fly* films were very challenging because of the nature of Brundle's changing character," says Walas. "We had to design all of the stages of make-up and puppets to make

sense with the gradual metamorphosis of the character while still keeping the actor underneath these appliances relatable as a human being. It was a very intense period of creation but also quite rewarding in the end. It was an amazing time to be working in special effects because everything you made was right there - on camera."

Released to cinemas on 10 February 1989, with an enormous marketing push from Fox ("Be afraid, be very, very afraid" screamed the theatrical trailers), *The Fly II* was, mind-bogglingly, geared towards the Valentine's Day market. Yes, someone actually thought that teenage lovers would want to snuggle-up to scenes of dog-destruction, body-horror and ample brain-bashing. In the end, the blood-splashed sequel notched up just \$20 million during its American release - not a total disaster but just half of what Cronenberg's previous caper had achieved.

In other words: there was not going to be a *Fly III* anytime soon...

"I'm glad I got to make the movie," concludes Walas. "There are some sequences I'm very proud of, like the ending, where the bad guy - Bartok - really does get his just desserts and ends up caught in the same sort of misery that he once afforded to a helpless animal. I don't know if there is much call for anyone to reappraise the movie today. I know there has not been any talk about a new Blu-ray or anything - but I had fun making it and came away with some interesting tales to tell!" **SFX**



# PENNY DREADFUL

What's happening in the world of horror movies this month...




From highbrow to low culture this month as a fab new body horror takes on Hollywood, a possession movie takes on Arthur Miller and a giant crocodile takes on top secret nanobots. Also

coming your way – tingling new television for 2015, a bloke in a dress with a katana and a new challenger to the title of worst movie ever made...




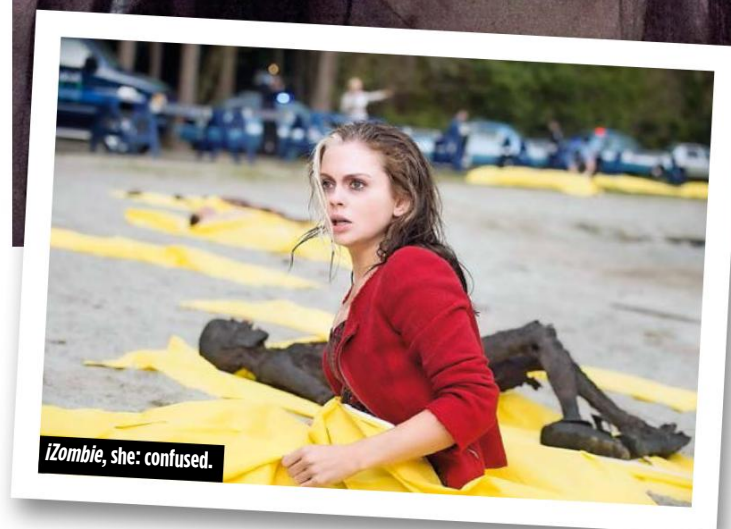
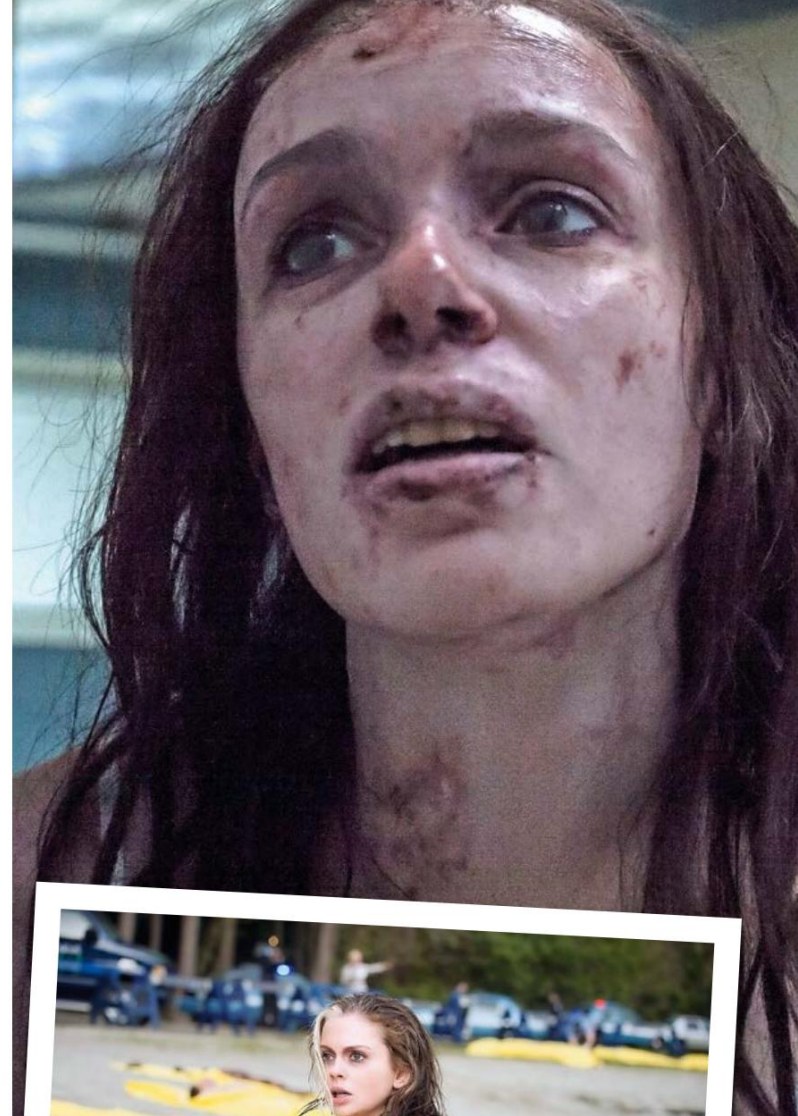
## VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRE

 A good friend of mine and fellow horror fan thought he'd met the perfect woman when his date was super-impressed by his shelf stacked with video nasties. Thinking it was just the right level of cool/weird/obscure to win him geek points he decided to put on (admittedly great) anatomy dummy mental illness romp *Pin* and exclaim "this is a good bit" before a boy reads out a sexually charged poem to his sister. Date didn't end well. With Valentine's Day on the way, then, the moral of the story? Even if your beloved is a *Human Centipede*-watching, Troma-loving gorehound – pick your date movie carefully. *Salo Or The 120 Days Of Sodom* is probably out

for example. Similarly *I Spit On Your Grave*. Or *Visitor Q*. Or in fact almost anything by Takashi Miike... Perhaps this explains the post-Val's 27 February release date of excellent chiller *It Follows*, missing out on all the cinephile couples who don't want to see *50 Shades Of Grey*. As mentioned a couple of issues back, it'll be the horror hit of the year. It is, however, about a sexually transmitted ghost. Stay home and rent *Teeth* instead.

## DEADITE AND LOVING IT


 Horror TV incoming! March sees the US release of the remake of gorgeous French zombie soap *The Returned* as well as cool meta-undead crime drama *iZombie*, while *Bates Motel* is opening its doors for a third



iZombie, she: confused.

season. But more exciting still is the news that *Ash Vs Evil Dead* is gearing up to begin its New Zealand shoot. Original Deadites Sam Raimi, Rob Tapert and Bruce Campbell are on board for this 10-part show with Campbell starring as an ageing Ash, out to pasture post-Necronomicon trauma until a new Deadite plague threatens to destroy humanity. Raimi will direct the first ep, due to air in the autumn/winter this year. "Bruce, Rob and I are thrilled to have the opportunity to tell the next chapter in Ash's lame but heroic saga," Raimi told *Variety*. Hail to the king, baby!

## WITCHING HOUR

 Ever wondered what a horror film written by master playwright and former husband

of Marilyn Monroe Arthur Miller would look like? I'm pretty confident that *Where The Devil Hides* (out now on DVD) very much isn't it. While this religious closed community-set slasher, where a prophecy surrounding six teenage girls born on the same day whips up a witch hunt, would probably like to be *The Crucible* reinvented as a modern horror story, it plays more like *The Village on Halloween* where in between the archaic language and the bonnets, sexy teenagers take their clothes off to a rock soundtrack. It is, to be fair, pacey and entertaining, with a decent cast, and the ending (which would make Miller cringe) is at least audacious. Next month: *Undeath Of A Salesman* where Willy Loman is a zombie Avon representative






## DREADFUL THING TO DO

Watch horror and feel cultured! To celebrate the 40th anniversary of Dario Argento's giallo classic *Profondo Rosso* (aka *Deep Red*), synth rock legends Goblin will be performing their original score live accompanying the film at the Barbican on Saturday 21 February. *Profondo Rosso* follows a musician and a reporter investigating the murder of a psychic by a gloved man. Expect garish, gorgeous gore galore. Point your browser to <http://bit.ly/1Cm3ErK> for tickets and timings.

Not a good look, *Starry Eyes* and a bloodied face.


chowing down on his bored housewife clients...

## CROCK OF GOLD

 More DVD delights coming in March from *Starry Eyes* and *The Samurai*, both FrightFest hits last year. *Starry Eyes* (out 16 March) is body-horror satire in the footsteps of David Cronenberg, following a fledgling actress in Hollywood who makes a dangerous pact with a producer. It's caustic, disgusting and fascinating, with a vein of wit and an undercurrent of fury – it's massively entertaining and funny and it's got something to say about the treatment of young women (and I love all that). Strangely it works as a horror companion piece to *Maps To The Stars*, the latest from Cronenberg himself. *The Samurai* (out 9 March) on the other hand, is tough and strange. A sort of fable about a cross-dressing sword-wielding killer stalking a German town pursued by a young policeman who might be his alter ego, it's shocking, stunning and challenging. Also out on 9 March – *Robocroc*, where top secret nanobots crash-land in a zoo and turn a 25-foot crocodile into a

mecha-killing machine. Because sometimes that's what you fancy.

## BEST WORST MOVIE

 What's worse than the worst movie ever made? A remake of the worst movie ever made. From Monster Pictures comes *Plan 9* on (straight to) DVD this month, a resurrection of Ed Wood's notoriously arse *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, a 1959 proto-zombie romp where aliens invade Earth and reanimate the dead to stop humans creating a doomsday weapon. This cut-price update relocates the action to "Nilbog" (surely a nod to the other "worst movie" *Troll 2*) where Leo from *Charmed* and no one else you recognise have to face down the undead from a "convenient store" (sic). Check out the trailer online, it looks very silly. The only question is, will this actually be bad enough to honour the original? Like trying to remake *The Godfather*, it's got to be stone cold gold or utter hilarious toss – anything in between would just be disrespectful. **SFX**



*Bates Motel* is open for business again, and this is your polite and caring host.

# DREADFUL A-Z OF HORROR

Penny's monthly dictionary of doom

## M IS FOR... MOTHER

### BAD BOY BUBBY

Rolf de Heer, 1993

► Seriously messed up Aussie black comedy horror about a 35-year-old man kept in a basement by his grotesque mother who physically and sexually abuses him. Eventually Bubby escapes, joins a rock band and leads a cult. Course he does. Warning: contains cat meanness.



### THE PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS

Wes Craven, 1991

► Creepy, brilliant fairy tale horror about a twisted couple "mommy" and "daddy" who keep hordes of cannibal children in the basement and attempt to cultivate the perfect child upstairs. Grim but fun with a sense of humour, starring Wendie Robie and Everett McGill, aka Big Ed and Nadine from *Twin Peaks*.



### PSYCHO

Alfred Hitchcock, 1960

► The ultimate mummy-issue chiller, based on the true case of killer and body snatcher Ed Gein who kept his mum's corpse in his house. Of course, the real Mrs Bates doesn't even really appear in *Psycho* but the influence of Norman's overbearing ma has deeply affected his shower-side manner.



### THE BROOD

David Cronenberg, 1979

► Mother of one threatens her real-life daughter by creating flesh and blood versions of her psychological problems in therapy which manifest as murderous midgets. Shocking, as all early Cronenbergs should be, Roger Ebert called it "disgusting in ways that are not entertaining". I disagree!





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# Rated

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★★★★★ Superb ★★★★★ Good ★★★★★ Average ★★★★★ Poor ★ Terrible



## Jupiter Ascending

92

Wachowskis wow with space opera spectacular

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A teenager is relentlessly stalked by a shapeshifting phantom in this eerie tale of sexually transmitted unease.



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Knock knock! Who's there? A monster from a pop-up book, to terrorise a struggling single mother and her son.



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### Something Coming Through

Benevolent aliens with advanced tech cause all sorts of societal shifts in Paul McAuley's pacy SF thriller.



# Jupiter Ascending

The Banks job

★★★★★

**Release Date:** 6 February

12A | 127 minutes

**Directors:** Lana and Andy Wachowski

**Cast:** Mila Kunis, Channing Tatum, Eddie Redmayne, Tuppence Middleton, Douglas Booth, Sean Bean

## HOW WILL THE WACHOWSKIS

be remembered when the time comes for them to hang up their megaphones? Some 16 years after Neo's first groundbreaking adventure in cyberspace, "the makers of *The Matrix*" is still the main way they're described. Yet that ignores the fact that in the decade and a half since, their output – while often flawed – has never been less than interesting. From the overblown *Matrix* sequels to the sugar rush of *Speed Racer* and the mind-bending *Cloud Atlas*, Lana and Andy have so frequently pushed the envelope of what it's possible to put on screen that they deserve the benefit of the doubt when it comes to the occasional storytelling misstep. Nobody makes movies quite like they do.

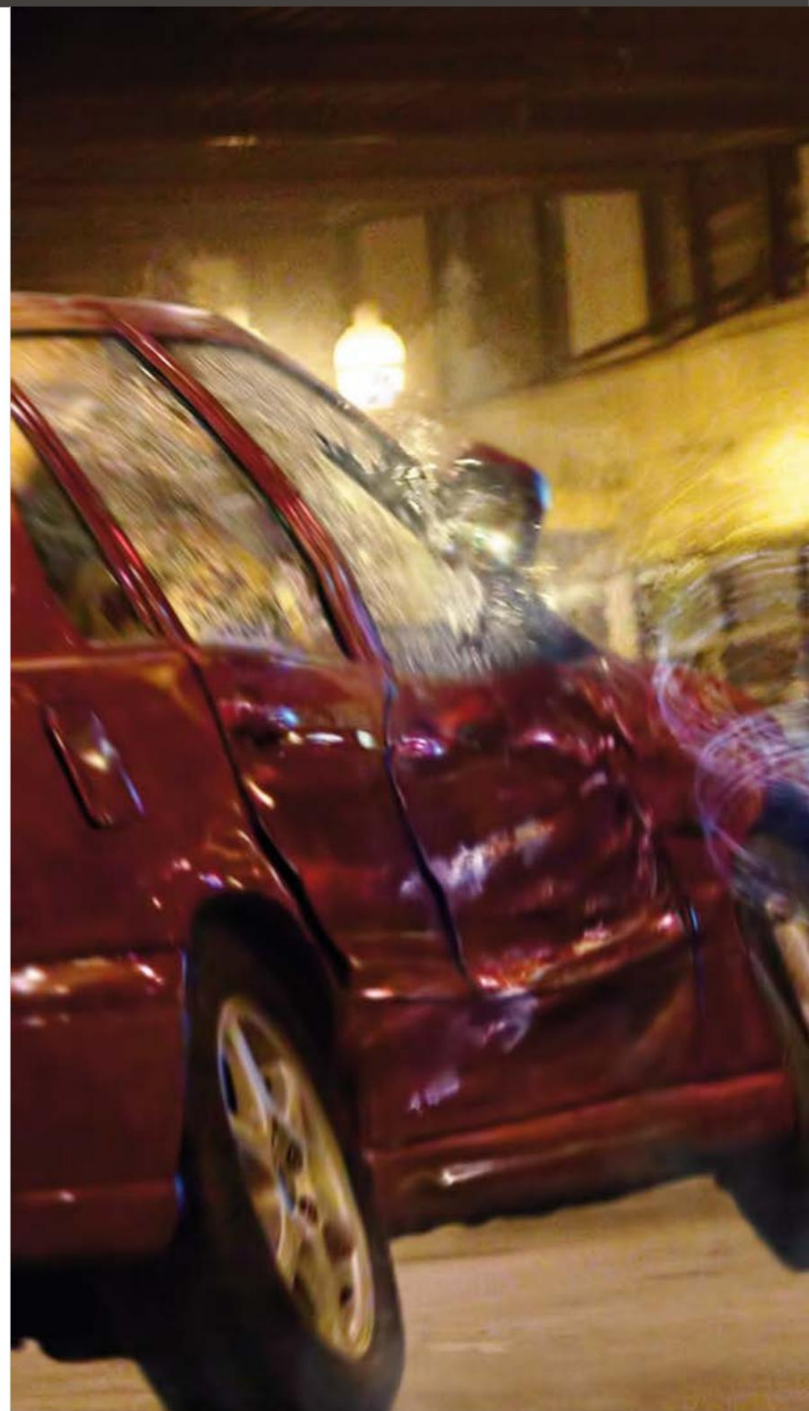
*Jupiter Ascending* is everything you'd expect from the siblings' first trip into orbit, a fun, inventive, visually stunning piece of space opera. Given free rein and a mega-budget to play among the stars, the duo have plundered ideas from a diverse range of sources (both screen

and page), and mixed them all up to make something that feels unlike anything we've seen before. Indeed, this is possibly as close as cinema has ever come to matching the vast scope of Banksian literary SF, such is the detail of the production design – the sheer density of things happening in each frame is mindboggling.

Both visually and in the action stakes, *Jupiter Ascending* could give pretty much any space movie a run for its money. One vertigo-inducing scene set above Chicago, where Channing Tatum's alien soldier Caine Wise protects Mila Kunis's Jupiter as he evades alien attackers while flying among the skyscrapers on rocket boots, is truly exhilarating, and feels so real you can almost feel the wind in your hair.

But go in expecting *Guardians Of The Galaxy* and you'll be disappointed. Yes, it has a human whisked away from Earth at its centre (in this case, Mila Kunis's eponymous toilet cleaner). Yes, it has a megalomaniac villain who cares not a jot for the little people (*quelle surprise*). And obviously the A-grade special effects are a given. But that's where the similarities end.

Where *Guardians* pulls off that tricky balancing act between having its tongue in its cheek and being credible science fiction, Jupiter opts for a different route, taking itself entirely seriously. It gets away with it too, because even at its most camp and outrageous – and it's often undeniably both – you always feel that everyone involved believes 100% in what they're doing. Yes, you even



buy that Sean Bean is a soldier whose genes are spliced with a bee's. Perversely, it's when *Jupiter* actually tries to be funny – in a couple of botched one-liners and the rather broad portrayal of Jupiter's Russian family – that it feels least assured.

As in *The Matrix*, it's the villains who stay in the memory. Eddie Redmayne, currently grabbing headlines for his role as Stephen Hawking in the awards-hoovering *The Theory Of Everything*, is brilliant in an entirely different way as Balem Abrasax. The scheming elder sibling of an uber-rich and powerful family, he's trying to claim the Earth for

himself in a performance of unashamed pantomime villainy that comes with just enough menace to keep him threatening. His interactions with similarly Machiavellian siblings Kalique (Tuppence Middleton) and Titus (Douglas Booth) play out like *Dallas In Space*, with whole planets taking the place of oil fields. Luckily, however, the political machinations here are rather more exciting than they were in *The Phantom Menace*. It's just a shame that you really have to keep your wits about you to keep track of who's doing what to whom and why. If you find yourself getting

**A fun, inventive,  
visually stunning  
space opera**





Why weren't piggybacks like this when we were at school?

lost among the double, triple and quadruple crosses, just remind yourself that if they've got a posh English accent, there's a decent chance they're up to no good.

Alas, the heroes fare less well. Channing Tatum is blandly efficient as Caine Wise, the half-wolf soldier dispatched to track down Jupiter, but the always-watchable Mila Kunis is saddled with a thankless role. The reincarnation of intergalactic royalty, Jupiter's thrown into the whole planet-hopping mess by fate, and doesn't become any more proactive as the movie goes on. Describing her as a heroine would be inaccurate, seeing as

she's really just a damsel-in-distress whose genes have been spliced with a McGuffin, a throwback of a character who needs rescuing nearly as often as Lois Lane. Her portrayal is both a misstep and a bizarre storytelling decision, seeing as her Chosen One arc bears so many similarities to Neo's in *The Matrix* – hell, the whole movie follows a similar blueprint, from its structure to themes about humans as a commodity – yet she's denied the chance to explore the potential of evolving into something new.

Ultimately how much you will enjoy *Jupiter Ascending* depends on

how you feel about the Wachowskis. If you reckon their careers as filmmakers-to-watch ended with *The Matrix*, you'll find little to win you back here. If, however, you still get excited by their unique brand of filmmaking, this will be right up your street, and you'll look past some glaring storytelling deficiencies to enjoy it for what it is. If you do, you'll be blown away by one of the most spectacular space movies ever to grace the big screen.

**Richard Edwards**

**?** Tatum wore a mouthpiece to change the shape of his jaw, which created problems: "I couldn't close my mouth to talk."

## MINDPROGE •

### Sean Bean

Stinger Apini in  
*Jupiter Ascending*



#### ► How would you describe the film?

It's a film that's got everything: action, depth of character, humour, and a very surreal quality; which is understandable considering the people who directed it. I remember Lana saying, "We're just trying to do something that's different and original, and we care very passionately about that." That's difficult because it's from a big studio. They've got their ideas and then the studio's got theirs. But they stick to what they truly believe in.

#### ► What's the film's vision of the future?

Pools of people are created in order to feed off them and use them as workers. So they're a bit like ants. There's pretty wicked stuff that you can imagine from big companies who take control of everything. It's got some nasty connotations to it.

#### ► Were the scenes on your character's farm shot on location?

Just outside of Chicago... That was probably one of the few real places in the whole film. It was amazing what they did with it. They got about 37,000 bees from some shop or toy factory. But then they had to glue on 37,000 magnets, one for every bee. I actually have some in my house now. I scare little kids when they come around!

#### ► You don't always survive until the last scene...

Never. Whenever I get a script I go to the back page. But you'll have to see what happens in this one!

**Joseph McCabe**



## It Follows



Do you remember the first time? You will...

★★★★★

**Release Date:** 27 February

15 | 100 minutes

**Director:** David Robert Mitchell

**Cast:** Maika Monroe, Keir Gilchrist, Jake Weary, Daniel Zovatto, Linda Boston, Heather Fairbanks, Ruby Harris

### MOST OF US SPEND OUR TEENAGE

years haunted by *something* – constant embarrassment, the crushing weight of expectation. Perhaps it's because, like ghosts, we're trapped between two worlds, the prisoners of feelings we can't quite escape or express. Often it's the twin spectres of sex and death that hang the heaviest, and horror films aren't shy in making this connection explicit.

Spiked with a sense of what he terms "interactive anxiety", David Robert Mitchell's film knows the work of Wes Craven, John Carpenter and Dario Argento as surely as it knows what it's like to be young and afraid. The first girl we meet flees hysterically from her home, screeching off in her car to the beach. Something's after her, but it's only when we get to know Jay (*The Guest*'s Maika Monroe) and her Scooby gang of friends that the threat starts to take shape. After Jay has sex with her nervy boyfriend (Jake Weary), he chloroforms her, ties her to a chair, and explains that he's

passed on the eponymous curse; that "It" will now follow her, instead of him. "It can look like anyone," he warns. "Sometimes I think it looks like the people you love just to hurt you..."

The ensuing scenes of supernatural stalking reach *Ju-On* levels of intensity, the camera panning paranoidly through 360 degrees as it watches, waiting, for *something* to come and get Jay while she's at school, at home, walking the silent Haddonfield-like streets. Try as she might to shift it, the sense of unspeakable, unstoppable menace is relentless – almost as relentless as the pounding electronic score, which power-drills *Suspiria* chords into the brain. Barring a few Oedipal interludes, grown-ups are nowhere to be found in this dreamy teen hinterland, as if Mitchell has transplanted the metaphysical disquiet of MR James's ghost stories onto *Stand By Me*'s listless, adult-free summer.

The result is one of the most original chillers of recent times, its central conceit a subtle, supple metaphor for all kinds of teenage angst, sexual trauma and the shadows that latch onto us when we're young, and never quite pass. **Matt Glasby**

**?** Mitchell was inspired by a recurring childhood nightmare concerning an inescapable creature.



The new photo director at Victoria's Secret had some unusual ideas.

## Monsters: Dark Continent

### Sins Of The Desert

★★★★★

**Release Date:** 27 February

15 | 123 minutes

**Director:** Tom Green

**Cast:** Joe Dempsie, Sofia Boutella, Johnny Harris, Sam Keeley, Nicholas Pinnock

### GARETH EDWARDS

emerged as a talent to watch back in 2010 with *Monsters*, a passion project that he wrote, directed, designed and shot, while also conjuring up impressive visual effects on his own computer. The result was a fascinating, character-driven stroll through a world forever changed, where giant alien creatures arrived on the back of a crashed Nasa probe and created "infected zones" where it's dangerous for humans to tread, lest they see giant squid things having it off near petrol stations. Edwards has since moved onto bigger beastly things with *Godzilla*, so for Vertigo Films to make the most of the critical

and commercial love for *Monsters*, someone new was needed.

Tom Green swaps the likes of *Misfits* for his first big-screen outing, and has delivered a film that takes the basic idea of *Monsters*, spins the clock ahead 10 years and drops military characters into a Middle East environment where the unchecked spread of the extra-terrestrials has amped up the tension between

Western forces and the natives. The plot finds soldiers on a seemingly routine – but still very dangerous – patrol mission to try to win friends among the local human population and cut down the aliens, with any thought of peaceful overtures now abandoned. And, what do you know... things don't go to plan.

Sadly, *Dark Continent* tries a lot of different ideas but doesn't quite pull

**Some hipsters' beards get way out of control.**



### The aliens end up largely as window dressing

them off. The shuddering, Paul Greengrass-like camerawork distracts more than it details, and every shot is loaded with some stylistic quirk. The actors, including Joe Dempsie and Johnny Harris, start out with plenty of character, but devolve into cyphers as the stakes are raised. Only Harris, with typically intense gravitas, makes much of an impression.

There's an admirable attempt to broaden the canvas and explore themes of Western encroachment into Middle Eastern lands and the reaction of their peoples, but the points made are hardly revolutionary and the aliens end up largely as window dressing. A disappointing sequel. **James White**

**?** If *Dark Continent* is a success, the producers have two more *Monsters* films lined up, with Green set to direct one of them.





Although the cucumber had long gone bad, it enjoyed its fling in the movie spotlight.

## Night At The Museum: Secret Of The Tomb

A Pharaoh To Remember

★★★★☆

**Release Date:** OUT NOW!

PG | 98 minutes

Director: Shawn Levy

Cast: Ben Stiller, Robin Williams, Steve Coogan, Dan Stevens

### AFTER TWO MIDDLING

instalments, the third *Night At The Museum* is finally one to remember – though not perhaps for the reasons Ben Stiller and director Shawn Levy might have hoped for when they began shooting their London-based trilogy-closer last February. Since then, of course, we've bid farewell to both Mickey Rooney and Robin Williams, lending a poignancy to proceedings that, if unearned, still makes for a more touching finale than fans of the film's 2006 and 2009 predecessors may have been expecting.

There's also an element of genuine jeopardy this time around, a weird "green rust" on the series' Egyptian relic-slash-MacGuffin threatening to rob it of its exhibit-animating powers. That's bad news for Williams's Teddy Roosevelt

mannequin, Owen Wilson's miniature cowboy and the rest of Stiller's nocturnal buddies, though not for a series that benefits hugely from a plot-mandated change of locale, a new (British) museum and a fresh bunch of waxworks for night-owl Larry to hang with.

Okay, so we could have done without Stiller's caveman doppelganger Laaa. But this is more than compensated for by Dan Stevens's Lancelot, a swaggering newbie straight out of *Monty Python* with a Buzz Lightyear-like aversion to admitting he's not real. The scene in which he gatecrashes a revival of *Camelot* is a particular hoot. But the most inventive sequence has Larry and Teddy plunge into an MC Escher painting, an interlude so dazzling you can almost overlook the weeing monkey.

Throw in Ben Kingsley as a Pharaoh, a giant serpent and some living Elgin Marbles and this is a surprisingly decent send-off for a saga that's taken a while to come to life. One question though. Is it a legal requirement that every montage of the English capital be scored with "London Calling"?

**Neil Smith**

Other films that have visited the British Museum include early Hitchcock *Blackmail*, *Night Of The Demon* and *The Ipcress File*.

## ALSO OUT

Two movies wriggled through our review net this month: firstly, the magnificently titled **DOCTOR PROCTOR'S FART POWDER** (13 February). In this Norwegian-made children's film, an inventor harnesses the power of bottom burps to send kids rocketing into the sky. Then there's found-footage flick

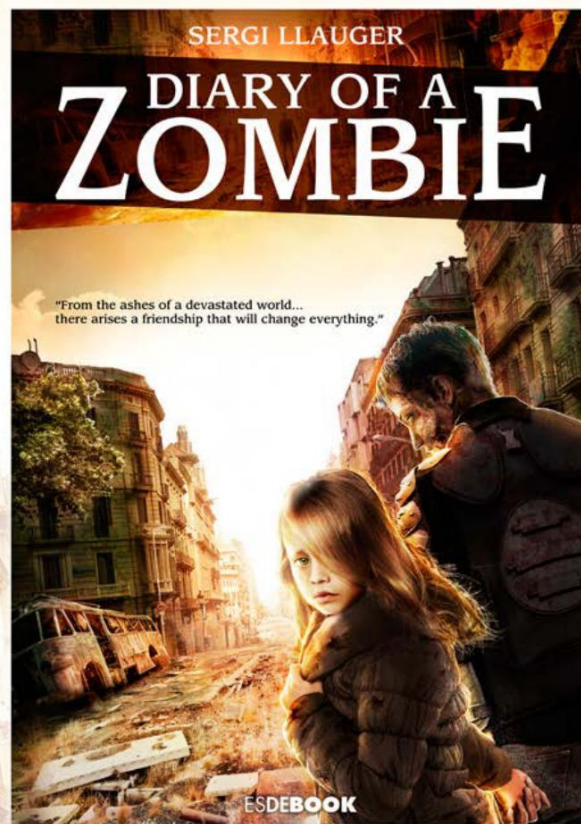
**PROJECT ALMANAC** (20 February), in which teens use a time machine to improve their lives, with disastrous consequences. That's also the day when Ethan Hawke-starring Robert Heinlein adap **PREDESTINATION** finally hits cinemas; we gave that ★★★★★ in SFX 255, before the release date slipped back.

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# The Babadook

The mummy's curse

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 16 February

2014 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director: Jennifer Kent

Cast: Essie Davis, Noah Wiseman, Daniel Henshall, Hayley McElhinney, Barbara West, Ben Winspear



## IT MAY BE

named after a weird supernatural entity – a strange, shadowy creature from a pop-up book – but

Aussie writer/director Jennifer Kent's feature debut has more to do with the little monsters you'll find in the nearest nursery, and the monstrous feelings they inspire. Commendably, it tackles some truths rarely addressed in the horror genre, where if maternal drives are touched on at all, it's usually simply as the fuel which powers a duel to the death. The reality is altogether more messy and complicated than that, of course. Yes, the bond between mother and child is powerful. But often affection and resentment sit side by side. Sometimes it's not easy to love.

Amelia embodies that. Seven years after her husband died in a car crash driving her to the hospital to give birth, she's still conflicted about her son, Samuel. You probably will be

**With its storybook silhouette stylings, the Babadook taps into some primal fears**

too. He can be sweet and funny, and with his love of magic tricks he's quite a performer. But he's also infuriatingly attention-seeking, prone to fits of screaming and violent outbursts. So when he starts talking to thin air and broken glass turns up in food it's easy to put it down to his behavioural problems. Because the Babadook couldn't possibly be real, could it?

The saucer-eyed Noah Wiseman gives a terrific performance as Sam, but is eclipsed by Essie Davis, excellent in the challenging role of his mother. As, like a Roman Polanski heroine, Essie slowly descends into mania, she has to project both vulnerability and ferociousness. As Davis astutely observes, it's like playing two roles from *The Shining* simultaneously: "A little bit of Shelley Duvall, a little bit of Jack Nicholson." She pulls it off with aplomb, summoning up a tornado of rage. For all its uncanny tricks – skittering across the ceiling like an insect, for example – the Babadook isn't the scariest thing here. She is. With its storybook silhouette stylings, part of a lineage stretching back through Freddy Krueger to the Struwwelpeter, the Babadook taps into some primal fears, but here's a concept far more potent: a mother with murderous impulses towards her own child; not because she's a psychopath, but because, pushed too far, she's fraying at the edges. In one startling outburst, Amelia roars at Sam, "Sometimes I wanna smash your head against a brick wall!" It's a thought that's crossed the minds of millions of perfectly decent parents, in moments of exhausted desperation.

Parenting manuals always stress the importance of family mealtimes. Perhaps not this one.

If *The Babadook* has a weakness, it's that the decision to make the film's world feel slightly abstract is something of a double-edged sword. There are few signs of the 21st century in Essie's house, which with its vintage set dressing and lack of modern tech could exist in the '50s or '70s – or in the pages of a storybook. This lends the story a feeling of timeless universality, but also undermines the sense that you might know these people; that they might live next door. Similarly, though the conclusion works in metaphorical terms, taken at face value it seems a little anti-climactic.

And when it comes to the "scary stuff", Kent uses the same devices – shorting lights, the door that swings open with a sinister creak – employed by countless directors before her.

None of this matters too much, though, because the film is so successful in the way it confronts a taboo that doesn't often figure in this genre; though it really shouldn't, that feels strikingly fresh. This obviously makes *The Babadook* a film particularly likely to appeal to a female audience, who all too often find their gender represented by college girls being chased through







the woods. But just as there are plenty of women who love a slasher flick, there's no impediment to male viewers enjoying *The Babadook* too. Fathers will respond to it, yes – but so should anyone capable of basic empathy. *The Babadook* doesn't just prove that it's possible to tackle "women's issues" in horror cinema, and to do so intelligently, but also that the results can have broad appeal. Let's hope that its success allows more filmmakers to follow Kent's example, and tell different types of spooky story.

**EXTRAS:** A Making Of (35 minutes) features the director, a pair of producers, Davis and two co-stars.

A thoughtful piece, it has some interesting insights into subjects such as how to get the best from a child actor, and the expressionist approach to production design. The latter is expanded upon in "There's No Place Like Home" (10 minutes), in which the designer takes us on a tour of the set, discussing the restricted colour palette and retro approach. A third featurette (seven minutes) interviews the guy who made the pop-up book prop. Two short pieces on stunts and "effects" shine a light on amusingly lo-fi techniques: in one, a tug on a rope helps Davis take an impossible leap

up the stairs – a moment edited so ruthlessly that it could only register on a subliminal level. In another, we discover that a close-up of a stabbing involved wrapping fabric around a leg of lamb!

Finally, the inclusion of "Monster" (10 minutes), the black and white short from 2005 which was the film's starting point, allows you to play compare and contrast: in that, the creature looks even more like he used to be the frontman of The White Stripes... **Ian Berriman**

**?** Hayley McElhinney, who plays Sam's aunt, distanced herself from Noah Wiseman during filming, to "find that indifference".

## MINDPROGE

### Jennifer Kent

Director of *The Babadook*



#### Are you a fan of horror?

► I am. I certainly don't look down on it. A lot of amazing directors cut their teeth on horror, especially if you look to the early horrors – back to the '20s with Carl Dreyer. A lot of those films are really artistic and beautiful, and that's what I saw as the potential for *The Babadook*. And I love the Polanski domestic horrors. *Repulsion* and *The Tenant* are great.

#### How did you approach working with a six-year-old?

► We took three weeks beforehand to prep him to know what acting was, but also what the *Babadook* was. He was drawing pictures of him and the *Babadook* and his mum and dad. He felt a really important part of the team. And I tried to shoot in sequence as much as possible, so he knew what was going on. Sometimes directors like to try and trick kids or keep them in the dark. For me, that doesn't make sense because children are really bright. Give them credit and they can do amazing things. Noah has an amazing resilience. I saw little boys in the shortlist that could have been good as well, but I just felt they didn't have the robust emotional quality that Noah had.

#### Is there a female audience for horror that isn't being well served?

► I was talking to a producer and he said, "Women over 30 start dropping off and stop watching it." And I don't think that's because they're uninterested. I think that's because horror is not as intelligent as it could be. But when it is, people respond to it. Horror doesn't have to just be about release. I think there's great potential. **Rosie Fletcher**



# The Maze Runner

Rebels Without A Map

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

**Release Date:** 9 February

2014 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director: Wes Ball

Cast: Dylan O'Brien, Thomas Brodie-Sangster, Will Poulter, Kaya Scodelario, Blake Cooper



## SOME FILMS AREN'T

necessarily bad, they're just not necessarily... necessary.

Take *The Maze Runner*. In so many ways it's actually quite impressive. But it's impossible to watch it without thinking, "Hunger Games rip-off".

A combination of *Lost* and *Lord Of The Flies*, this YA adaptation sees a group of amnesiac teenage boys dumped in a massive walled enclosure (it has its own forest!). The single exit – open only during the day – leads to a maze that fills up at night with CG monsters; you don't want to get trapped in there when the doors close. By day, "Maze Runners" nip through the labyrinth trying to map it and find a way out.

The film's certainly unusual in two respects. The one female character – when she's suddenly introduced halfway through – doesn't immediately become a lust object (there's too much bromance going on for her to get a look in, to be fair). Also, it's in no

hurry to throw big action setpieces at you. The film starts small and talky and opens up as it goes along.

The acting is of a very high standard and there's some good meaty drama here about action vs inaction and power politics. Visually it impresses too, with a gritty, earthy feel and – until the climax – a refreshing lack of fancy camerawork for fancy camerawork's sake.

Sadly the big reveal at the end about the nature of the maze is a combination of pseudo-science waffle and a desperate bid for a sequel. With a more satisfying, self-contained conclusion and a different release date – say, 2005 – *The Maze Runner* may have made more of an impact. Instead it feels like it's run into a brick wall.

**EXTRAS:** Both the DVD and Blu-ray have commentary by the director and a co-writer, deleted scenes (19 minutes) and galleries. The Blu-ray adds a five-part Making Of (42 minutes); a gag reel (seven minutes); "The Chuck Diaries" (a six-minute featurette on how to get an audition via Twitter); "Ruin", a dystopian CGI short from director Wes Ball (eight minutes); and 34 minutes of effects gubbins. **Dave Golder**

? The "name wall" – inscribed with Gladers' monickers – includes Wes (as in director Ball) and Wyck (as in producer Wyck Godfrey).



As first dates go, it wasn't a huge success.

# Dracula Untold

Vlad Tepid

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

**Release Date:** 9 February

2014 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director: Gary Shore

Cast: Luke Evans, Dominic Cooper, Sarah Gadon, Art Parkinson, Charles Dance



## INTENDED TO

reintroduce and reboot Universal's iconic monsters for a generation raised on

Marvel's all-conquering brand of cinematic superheroics, *Dracula Untold* is an underwhelming first step.

Luke Evans stars as Vlad Tepes, dedicated family man and Prince of Wallachia. After years of peace, the Turkish Sultan Mehmed II (Dominic Cooper) demands 1,000 Wallachian boys to serve in his army, including Vlad's own son. Hopelessly outnumbered, Vlad ventures to Broken Tooth Mountain, where

Charles Dance's mellifluous Master Vampire grants him the unholy power needed to defeat the invaders.

Set centuries before Drac's bloodsucking Victorian heyday, the film puts an initially interesting historical spin on the tale, adding supernatural shenanigans to the real-life story of Vlad the Impaler. It casts Vlad as a sympathetic figure, a

tragic hero who falls into darkness trying to save the ones he loves. But what could have been a compelling character arc is undone by predictable plotting that never leaves you in any doubt where the story is going.

Peculiarly it's more superhero story than horror, with impossible bat-based powers and sweeping *Lord Of The*

## The potential of this world is largely unexplored



"There is NO dandruff on my shoulder, do you hear?"

*Rings*-style scraps in abundance, but a noticeable absence of bloodshed and scares. The supporting cast is completely forgettable, it's poorly paced and a little too straight-faced, leaving the strange potential of this world largely unexplored.

Evans is a watchable leading man and does a decent job with the cod-Shakespeare dialogue, while director Gary Shore uses Northern Ireland's natural beauty to striking effect, and crafts some genuinely impressive visual effects sequences. It's the story that really lets this down – the sad fact is it would have been better left untold.

**EXTRAS:** A director's commentary, a 10-minute "day in the life of Luke Evans" featurette, a brief alternate opening, a seven-minute featurette on bringing back Dracula, a bizarre 20-minute featurette where Luke Evans talks you through the film, and 13 minutes of genuinely interesting deleted scenes – including one with Slavic witch Baba Yaga, cut from the finished film. **Jordan Farley**

? In the original script (and early publicity), Charles Dance's character was identified as the Roman Emperor Caligula.



# Life After Beth

Undying love

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

**Release Date:** OUT NOW!

2014 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director: Jeff Baena

Cast: Aubrey Plaza, Dane DeHaan, Anna Kendrick, Molly Shannon, Cheryl Hines, Paul Reiser, Matthew Gray Gubler, John C Reilly



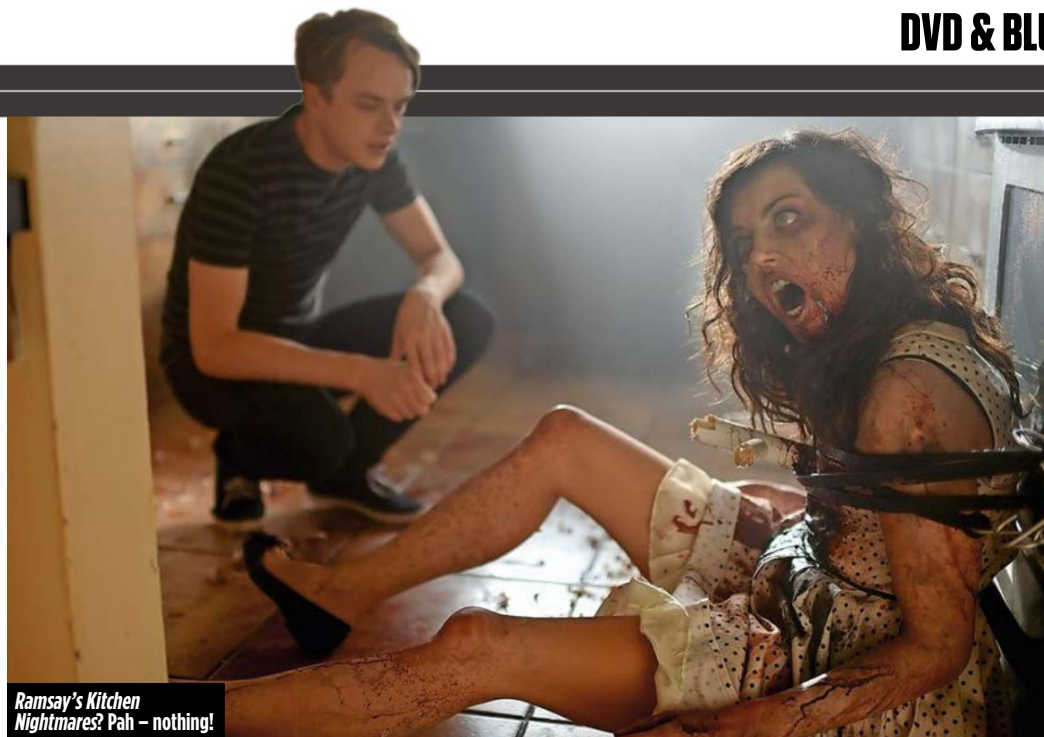
## DON'T YOU JUST

hate the way any new zombie comedy is inevitably compared to *Shaun Of The Dead*?

Surely a movie can be judged on its own terms! Well, sorry... but we're about to do it again.

To be fair, there's more reason to do so here than is often the case. There are points of comparison between *Shaun* and this latest zomcom – and not just the punning use of Christian names. Both have romantic elements; both make use of suburban settings; both draw comedy from awkward relationships with parents.

Dane "Green Goblin" DeHaan plays the grieving Zach, who's bewildered



Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares? Pah – nothing!

to discover that his late girlfriend Beth (*Parks And Recreation*'s Aubrey Plaza) has, impossibly, returned to life. Beth's mum and dad are keen to keep this "resurrection" under wraps, but this proves increasingly difficult, since she's returned with intense appetites and superhuman strength...

Both DeHaan and Plaza are perfectly suited to their roles, but somehow the film's never quite as amusing as it should be. There are some winning sight gags – like a decaying Beth stumbling about with

a cooker strapped to her back, after an unsuccessful attempt to subdue her. But flashes of wit are few and far between.

More critically, it's never really that affecting – unlike *Shaun*, which stirred genuinely heartbreaking moments of tragedy into the mix. The eventual revelation that the couple's relationship was far from perfect feels like a rotten miscalculation, as does the ease with which Zach moves onto a new squeeze. If he doesn't care all that deeply about Beth, why should

we? It's a great premise, but one that the screenplay doesn't quite live up to.

**EXTRAS:** Plaza, DeHaan and co-star Matthew Gray Gubler join writer/director Jeff Baena for a commentary. There's also a Making Of (16 minutes), and 20 minutes of deleted scenes; some of these feature *Arrested Development*'s Alia Shawkat as a friend of Zach's – a character completely cut from the film. **Ian Berriman**

**P** Plaza bought Jeff Baena (her boyfriend) helicopter lessons in case of a zombie apocalypse. But he didn't take them.

# Dominion Season One

Angels With Grumpy Faces

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

**Release Date:** OUT NOW!

2014 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

Creator: Vaughn Wilmott

Cast: Christopher Egan, Tom Wisdom, Roxanne McKee, Anthony Head, Alan Dale



## USING THE

Bible as inspiration for your fantasy series is only slightly less desperate than using a Scott Stewart film for inspiration. *Dominion* uses both.

This TV sequel to 2010 turkey *Legion* (in which an American diner becomes an unlikely battleground for good/bad angels) is set in a post-apocalyptic Las Vegas, now walled-off from a world where feral angels run wild. Why feral? Well, they're more interesting than harp-playing cherubs.

Expressionless (though apparently guilt-ridden) archangel Michael helps the citizens of "Vega", seemingly in

return for an endless supply of soft furnishings, while evil brother Gabriel auditions for Baron Hardup in pantomime, plotting nasty stuff while twirling his moustache.

There's a "chosen one", Alex, with tattoos all over his body only he can read (presumably using a mirror for the ones on his back); he has a destiny,

of course. Destiny also brings together two telefantasy stalwarts – Anthony Head (as a shifty counsellor) and Alan Dale (as Vega's leader) – in the same show for the first time. They look like they're trying to inject some class, but fail miserably, and Head's plantation-owner accent is hilarious.

It's pretty dire stuff, where prophecies are plotting and political intrigue comes down to who has the juicier blackmail material time after time after time...

Still, there are some pretty CGI angel wings and a lot of shirtless male torsos, if you're the sort to whom that

kind of thing appeals. The rest of us are praying for redemption.

**EXTRAS:** Both formats have deleted scenes (13 minutes) and a gag reel, and include the full-length two-part season finale as it aired in the UK, not the condensed version shown in the US. **Dave Golder**

## DRINKING GAME

TAKE A SWIG OF WATER-TURNED-TO-WINE EVERY TIME...

- Alex's tattoos expand or otherwise get animated.
- Somebody delivers a vague prophecy.
- An angel's wings vanish between shots, with just a sound effect to suggest they've neatly folded them up.
- Someone says, "The Chosen One".
- Somebody says, "I'm doing what's best for..."
- An angel does his best Spider-Man routine.
- Michael acts like a Vulcan.
- Michael acts like a '70s TV yoga guru.



Finding leather jackets with wing holes was a nightmare.





"Hello, I'm from the 1970s."

## Rabid

A Chambers piece

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

**Release Date:** 9 February

1977 | 18 | Dual format Blu-ray/DVD

Director: David Cronenberg

Cast: Marilyn Chambers, Frank Moore, Joe Silver, Howard Rhyshpan, Patricia Gage



**AFTER THE** success of *Shivers*, David Cronenberg's debut feature proper, he was asked for more of the same

– and duly delivered.

Like *Shivers*, *Rabid* concerns an epidemic that unleashes its victims' darker drives – this time, aggressive, not sexual. It's at its best when jolting the viewer with sudden, savage violence: a surgeon snipping a colleague's finger off with scissors; a construction worker driving a pneumatic drill through a car door.

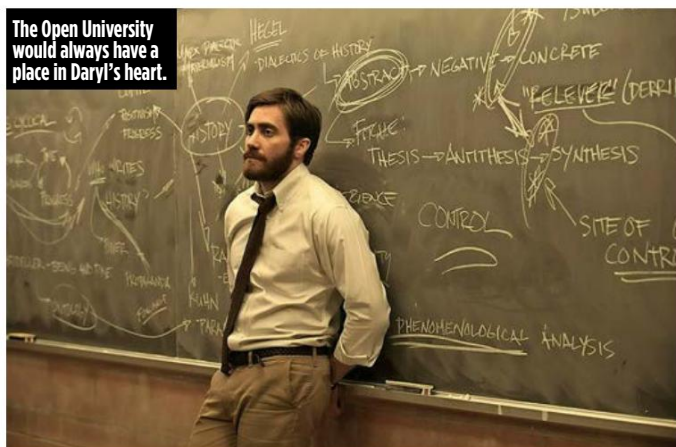
Porn star Marilyn Chambers is perfectly adequate as the woman who spreads the infection – though the role isn't exactly a stretch, given

that it mostly requires her to act seductive, look ravenous, or simulate satiated satisfaction. In large part, *Rabid* is a porno without the sex.

It doesn't match *Shivers* for two reasons. Firstly, the ridiculousness of the premise, which gave the director himself a crisis of confidence: as Cronenberg realised, "This woman grows a cock thing in her armpit and sucks people's blood through it... This is nuts!" Secondly, *Shivers*' tale of libidinal liberation had a clear philosophy underpinning it; *Rabid* doesn't – and little is made of the unusual notion of a woman penetrating her victims. Despite its broader scope and scale, that means it isn't quite as compelling as its predecessor.

**EXTRAS:** An old Cronenberg commentary and interview, a 1999 documentary on his career, and five fresh features: commentary by a Cronenberg expert; interviews with two producers and an effects guy; a piece on production company Cinépix. A trailer and a booklet round things off. **Ian Berriman**

When Marilyn Chambers had to cry on cue, she would "think of when Fluffy died" – Fluffy being the name of her pet cat.



The Open University would always have a place in Daryl's heart.

## Enemy

Double Dutch?

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

**Release Date:** 9 February

2014 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director: Denis Villeneuve

Cast: Jake Gyllenhaal, Melanie Laurent, Sarah Gadon



**SOMETIMES YOU** wish you could award question marks instead of stars.

Like Roger Moore in 1970's *The Man Who Haunted Himself* and Jesse Eisenberg in *The Double*, *Enemy*'s Jake Gyllenhaal must confront his doppelgänger. He plays history professor Adam who, while watching a DVD, spots an actor who looks and sounds exactly like him. Developing an obsession with the man, he tracks him down to arrange a meet, and their lives begin to intertwine...

"Chaos is order yet undeciphered" reads the opening epigram – a line from Portuguese author José Saramago's original 2002 novel. When the credits roll on

*Enemy*, it remains stubbornly unencrypted. Is it significant that Adam lectures on how dictatorships control their citizens, and "patterns that repeat through history"? What's the significance of the darkened room where statuesque women perform for an audience of middle-aged men? And what the hell is it with the spiders? You may posit some theories, but *Enemy* resists any simple definition.

It's an unnerving film – understated and detached, painted in sickly sepia tones, featuring faintly sinister shots of ominously looming architecture. Gyllenhaal impresses in his dual role, fluently speaking a different body language depending on whether he's inhabiting the cowed, nervy Adam or his more self-possessed double. Repeat viewings are called for, and *Enemy* has qualities that make it a pleasure to enter the labyrinth again in search of answers.

**EXTRAS:** Cast and crew talk about what they think it all means in a 17-minute Making Of. **Ian Berriman**

Villeneuve boiled it down for Gyllenhaal: "a movie about being a man in a relationship, and the fear and the relief in commitment."

## ROUND-UP

### DOCTOR WHO: LAST CHRISTMAS

**Release Date:** OUT NOW!

2014 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD



Steven Moffat's fifth Christmas special was probably the best one since "The Christmas Invasion", managing the impressive balancing act of cramming in all sorts of festive iconography while simultaneously being clever and creepy. If back in December you were too busy stuffing your face with mince pies to read our verdict, you can catch up with it at <http://bit.ly/lastchristmasSFX>. Bonus-wise, this release comes with a commentary by director Paul Wilmshurst and producer Paul Frift (who touch on important matters such as Nick Frost's beard), plus the usual behind-the-scenes peek courtesy of *Doctor Who Extra* (13 minutes).

### JESSABELLE

**Release Date:** OUT NOW!

2014 | 15 | DVD



A vengeful spirit, possession and voodoo rituals figure in this latest low-budget horror from Blumhouse, the company that previously brought us the likes of *Insidious*, *Sinister* and *The Purge*. Aussie actor Sarah Snook is rather good as Jessie, who returns to her childhood home in the wilds of Louisiana after losing her partner and unborn child in a car crash. There she finds messages recorded on VHS by her tarot-loving mother (now deceased), and eventually discovers that her family has a terrible secret... Director Kevin Greutart (a veteran of the *Saw* franchise) conjures some ominous atmosphere, but until the exposition bomb explodes at the end it's all a little uneventful.

### KNIGHTS OF BADASSDOM

**Release Date:** 9 February

2014 | 15 | DVD



The cast is the most impressive thing about this meta fantasy/horror-comedy, which unites *True Blood*'s Ryan Kwanten, *Firefly*'s Summer Glau and *Game Of Thrones*' Peter Dinklage. Kwanten plays metalhead mechanic Joe, who, after being dumped by his girlfriend for his lack of ambition, is dragged off to a Live Action Role Playing tournament by his buddies. There, someone accidentally summons up a fearsome succubus in the form of Joe's ex, which then stalks the woods slaughtering the assembled competitors. Underdeveloped characters and rather one-note humour mean that if it's a comedy about LARPs you're after, you're better off sticking with *Role Models*.

### WHERE THE DEVIL HIDES

**Release Date:** OUT NOW!

2014 | 15 | DVD



In an Amish-style religious community, six girls are born simultaneously on the sixth day of the sixth month, in line with a prophecy that one will become "the Devil's hand" when midnight strikes on their 18th birthday. As the date looms on the horizon, young Mary suffers disturbing visions as one by one the girls are offed by a hooded figure... Part slasher whodunit, part supernatural thriller, part coming-of-age tale, the film keeps you guessing, but seems more interested in melodrama than scares, and cast members like Colm Meaney (a tyrannical Elder), Rufus Sewell (Mary's caring father) and Jennifer Carpenter (scowly stepmother) are lumbered with generic roles.



# Game Of Thrones Season Four



## For the Tywin!

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

**Release Date:** 16 February

2014 | 18 | Blu-ray/DVD

Showrunners: David Benioff, DB Weiss

Cast: Peter Dinklage, Lena Headey, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, Emilia Clarke, Kit Harington, Charles Dance, Pedro Pascal



### FOUR YEARS

into HBO's adaptation of George RR Martin's saga and life in Westeros isn't getting any easier.

This time, however, there's at least the sense that the tide of misery is about to turn – bad things have finally started happening to bad people, *as well as* the good ones who've been on the receiving end since day one.

Impressively for a show made up of so many disparate story threads, there are few weak links here. Most of the mammoth cast get something meaty to chew on, though it's newbie prince Oberyn Martell (an instant rival to Tyrion as coolest character in the show), and Arya and the Hound's

unconventional odd couple road trip that really stand out.

While there's nothing to quite rival season three's Red Wedding for shock value, this year has its own moments of epic action (the assault on Castle Black), gore (the duel for Tyrion's life) and even a wedding of its own. In the quieter moments,

meanwhile, the character interplay is as good as anything on TV – no show does scheming and betrayal like *Game Of Thrones*.

**EXTRAS:** Even if you look past the usual comprehensive Blu-ray-only in-episode guides and rundowns of Westeros mythology, this is a solid package whichever breed of shiny



disc you buy it on. Both Blu-ray and DVD viewers can enjoy cast/crew commentaries on nine of the ten episodes. Episode three ("Breaker Of Chains") is the one to miss the cut – could its absence have anything to do with the season's one misstep, an extremely unpleasant scene where Jaime sexually assaults his sister, Cersei? It's hard to imagine what the speakers would have been able to say.

In terms of behind-the-scenes stuff, the banners are raised by "Behind The Battle For The Wall" (35 minutes), an in-depth doc about the making of the season's epic episode nine, and "The Fallen Roundtable" (28 minutes), an entertaining sit-down discussion with the actors whose characters have learned that season four's "All Men Must Die" tagline is painfully true. There's also a featurette about "Bastards Of Westeros" (seven minutes) – that theme must be a first for a DVD extra. A handy recap of season three (25 minutes), brief deleted scenes (three minutes) and a fun gag reel round out the package.

**Richard Edwards**

? The Blu-ray from Amazon has a bonus disc with three featurettes on the wedding, the costumes and the visual effects.

## Annabelle

Conjuring a prequel

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

**Release Date:** 23 February

2014 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director: John R. Leonetti

Cast: Annabelle Wallis, Ward Horton, Tony Amendola, Alfie Woodward, Kerry O'Malley



### IT'S EASY TO

pour scorn on *Annabelle* and its predecessor, *The Conjuring*. Both suffer from a dearth of new ideas and borrow heavily from older, better films. They go for quiet/loud jump scares too often, rather than building a real sense of dread.

The ingredients here are familiar: a happy couple buy a doll that gets possessed by a demonic entity. They move house, but the doll comes after them, causing all manner of supernatural havoc by slamming doors, attacking priests and – really frightening this – dicking about with their record player.

It's old hat, then. But there's a charm to *Annabelle*. The '60s setting, complete with Manson paranoia, is well evoked. The cast is fine, though Alfie Woodward practically has "Ask me about my usefulness as a plot



device" written on a name badge. Crucially, *Annabelle* herself is a frightful thing. The ominous lingering shots of the doll are pregnant with menace. You sit, nervously waiting for her to move, but the film smartly resists the temptation of going full *Chucky*.

Hardcore horror fans may grumble about *Annabelle*'s success. That's okay – this isn't for them. It's mainstream horror aimed at a teen audience who just want some good, spooky fun. In that regard, it works just fine.

**EXTRAS:** The DVD has a five-minute piece discussing spooky goings-on on set. The Blu-ray (rated) adds short featurettes on a murder scene, the doll and make-up, plus 20 minutes of deleted scenes. **Will Salmon**

? *Annabelle* is based on a "real" possessed doll. Linked to one death, it currently resides in an occult museum in Connecticut.

## Coherence

Smart quantum-theory thriller

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

**Release Date:** 16 February

2013 | 15 | DVD

Director: James Ward Byrkit

Cast: Emily Baldoni, Maury Sterling, Nicholas Brendon, Elizabeth Gracen, Hugo Armstrong



### WITH A HIGH-

concept idea that could easily confuse a good chunk of the audience, a budget that makes

*Paranormal Activity* look like a blockbuster, a shoot that lasted a mere five nights and dialogue that's largely improvised, *Coherence* should be anything *but* coherent. Instead, what we have here is an astonishingly gripping thriller that barely sets foot outside of somebody's lounge and yet still has us gasping at its breadth.

With a cast of actors you might not recognise (barring *Buffy*'s Nicholas Brendon, whose character is strangely meta – you'll see what we mean when you watch it), at first the plot seems to be nothing more than a routine schlock horror, as a comet passing overhead causes weird things to happen to a group



of friends assembled for a dinner party. But what weird things they are: common-or-garden disrupted phone and Wi-Fi signals soon start turning into concepts that cover everything from Schrödinger's cat to *Sliding Doors*, leaving you scratching your head trying to work everything out – particularly when doubles start turning up...

The performances are perfect, the characters believable and the plot twists occasionally chilling. Somehow, against all odds, *Coherence* weaves a complex, puzzling and fascinating tale of universes colliding that you won't forget in a hurry.

**EXTRAS:** A director's commentary, a short Making Of and camera test footage. **Jayne Nelson**

? Nicholas Brendon's identical twin Kelly Donovan makes a fleeting appearance as his other self – just as he did in *Buffy*.



## Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

Turtley rubbish

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 16 February

2014 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director: Jonathan Liebesman

Cast: Megan Fox, Will Arnett, William Fichtner, Alan Ritchson, Pete Ploszek, Noel Fisher, Jeremy Howard



### AT ONE POINT

during *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, William Fichtner's Eric Sacks declares, without a hint of irony, "We will drain every last ounce of their blood to get it... even if it kills them." Savour the moment, because it's the only memorable thing about this half-witted reboot.

April O'Neil (Megan Fox) is a reporter who discovers the story of a lifetime: anthropomorphic ninja turtles living in the sewers of New York City. At the same time, villain Shredder is planning to unleash a chemical weapon on New York. Cue empty eye candy.

Despite dispensing with the planned extra-terrestrial origins after fan outcry, *TMNT* still botches



Turtles lore to the point that the nonsensical story only serves to annoy. It provides a threadbare connective tissue between glossy but dull setpieces and fights rendered incomprehensible by lightning cuts and gymnastic camerawork.

The CG Turtles lose all the charm of their cartoon counterparts, thanks to a grotty "realistic" redesign and trite dialogue. They're effectively invincible too, leaving the film without any discernible sense of peril beyond the thought that you'll never get those 101 minutes back.

**EXTRAS:** On Blu-ray (rated): an extended ending, 18 minutes on the effects, two featurettes, an odd mini-doc about real-life turtles and ninjas, and a music video. The DVD has nothing. **Jordan Farley**

? Turtles co-creator Kevin Eastman worked as a consultant on the film and provided animation for the opening sequence.

## Survival Code

Pilot error

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 9 February

2013 | 15 | DVD

Director: David Frazee

Cast: Ty Olsson, Patrick Gallagher, Michelle Harrison, Christine Horne



### SURVIVAL CODE

made its gogglebox debut two years ago – except it wasn't called *Survival Code* then. The more

alluringly monickered *Borealis* was originally a pilot for a never-picked-up Canadian TV series that pitched itself as a futuristic *Deadwood*, or an earthly *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. Now it arrives on this side of the pond, with an agonisingly generic Syfy movie-like title and a DVD cover that makes it look like Andy McNab has finally gone genre.

Set in 2045, *Borealis* (let's call it that, okay?) None of this *Survival Code* silliness) focuses on an Arctic town in an area where Russians, Canadians, Norwegians and the League of Nations are all trying to claim sovereignty. By this time the ice cap is melting, and the town



Yeah, but it's not a Commodore 64.

of *Borealis* is home to the last untapped oil, gas and mineral deposits on the planet.

There's a lot to love in this one-shot, and a lot to mourn. It sets up a politically complex world and lines up a gaggle of morally grey and conflicted characters. It feels desperately overcrowded though, with few of those characters given enough space to make a firm impression. No doubt a full season would have filled them all out, but in a single 90-minute blast it feels a tad overwhelming.

Despite wearing its sci-fi lightly, *Borealis* is definitely worth a gander. Prepare to ask yourself, "Whatever came over the execs to put the kibosh on this one?"

**EXTRAS:** None. **Steve O'Brien**

? Star Ty Olsson says *SPACE* wanted to pick up the series, but it didn't happen due to changes at the network's parent company.

## The Book Of Life

Mad Mex

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 16 February

2014 | PG | Blu-ray/DVD

Director: Jorge R Gutierrez

Cast: Diego Luna, Zoe Saldana, Channing Tatum, Ron Perlman, Kate del Castillo



### LESS A MOVIE,

more an animated celebration of every Mexican cultural cliché you could think of, *The Book Of Life* is a trad Disney-style fairytale given a manic mariachi makeover. Catholic nuns, Mexican wrestling priests, a troubadour bullfighter, moustache obsessions, bandits, the Day of the Dead, Mayan gods... they're all cheerily thrown into a mix that's spicier than an extra-hot quesadilla.

The tale of two friends who fall in love with the same girl, whose fates are bound to those of two bickering gods who can't resist a wager, this Guillermo del Toro-produced toon looks stunning, with marionette characters and a Tim Burton vibe (though with more repulsive noses). It's so beautiful at times, you wonder if director Jorge Gutierrez



has actually invented a couple of new colours.

Tonally, it's more Genndy Tartakovsky or *The Lego Movie* than Pixar/Disney – fast-paced, slapstick and fizzing with ideas. It's a shame, in this day and age, that the lead female character – ass-kicking kung fu setpiece notwithstanding – basically sits around waiting for someone to marry, but that aside, viva *El Libro De La Vida*!

**EXTRAS:** The DVD has a director's commentary, "The Adventures Of Chuy" (a three-minute animated short by Gutierrez), a compilation of musical highlights from the film (25 minutes), a music video and galleries. The Blu-ray (rated) adds three featurettes (29 minutes).

**Dave Golder**

? Famous Spanish tenor Plácido Domingo voices Skeleton Jorge, a dead bullfighter with a secret desire to be an opera singer.

## Ejecta

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD



### AS DR PETER

Venkman might almost say, the trouble with aliens is that you just can't trust them. The ones

who regularly visit William Cassidy (Julian Richings) aren't nipping round for a cuppa. Oh no, they're the abducting and probing sort. If that wasn't bad enough, their experiments have made William a target for the military.

This Canadian film is a bricolage of different directorial styles. It has moments of found-footage horror, first-person-shooter action and some intense, 24-style grilling scenes. It's in the latter that *Ejecta* falls down. All the actors are capable enough, but William spends too much time in chains.

Still, the aliens are convincingly creepy and the script, by *Pontypool* screenwriter Tony Burgess, finds a few fresh angles on the familiar abduction storyline.

**EXTRAS:** None. **Will Salmon**

## Grace: The Possession



★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | 15 | DVD



### GRACE (ALEXIA

Fast) is a sheltered teenage girl whose religious upbringing makes for one hell of a culture shock when she gets to university. Especially since Grace is possessed by a demon.

It's a clichéd premise, but director Jeff Chan does have one trick up his sleeve: the film is shot in the first person, the story told through Grace's increasingly unreliable POV.

There's scope for a really original take on old tropes, but instead, the quirky conceit is just a crutch propping up a dull (and occasionally offensive) story. There are too many mirror scares, and every authority figure in the movie is moronic beyond belief. Poor Lin Shaye brings her best crazy face as Grace's strict grandmother, but she's wasting her time trying to make this fun.

**EXTRAS:** None. **Sarah Dobbs**



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## Ragnarok: The Viking Apocalypse

Snake Surprise

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2013 | 12 | DVD

Director: Mikkel Braenne Sandemose

Cast: Pål Sverre Hagen, Nicolai Cleve Broch, Bjørn Sundquist



### IGNORE THE

title, which has clearly strayed from the cover of some Scandinavian death metal album. There's nothing especially apocalyptic about this Norwegian horror – and a distinct shortfall of Vikings, come to that (bad news if you have a taste for plights, pillage and dragon ships).

The prologue throws some token Odin-bothering Norsemen our way, but the action quickly moves to the modern day. Our hero is an archaeologist, studying cryptic runes unearthed in a burial mound – “the biggest and most spectacular Viking find in world history,” we're told. Played with everyman charm by Pål Sverre Hagen, he's more muesli-fed academic than two-fisted Indiana Jones clone, struggling with



single parenthood and given to quoting the Cultural Heritage Act.

As its plot follows a secret map to remote Finnmark, *Ragnarok* offers standard issue treasure hunt stuff before finally unmasking itself as an old-fashioned monster flick. The lamb-gobbling beastie in the lake proves to be the great Midgard serpent of Norse mythology, updating its schtick to embrace *Jaws*-style underwater POV shots. It's a decent effects creation, just the right side of Syfy cheese.

The Norwegian landscapes are stunning, but *Ragnarok* ultimately underwhelms, its thrills neutered and family-friendly, undone by an ending that proves a scaly, slithering anti-climax.

**EXTRAS:** A trailer. **Nick Setchfield**

**?** In Norse mythology the serpent is the arch foe of Thor. Odds are we'll see it on-screen in 2017's *Thor: Ragnarok*.

## Drew: The Man Behind The Poster

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 16 February

2013 | E | DVD



### TAKE A SLUG OF

bourbon each time you hear the word “iconic” in this celebration of poster artist Drew Struzan and you'll be blotto by the end credits. For once, however, it's the perfect word: illustrating campaigns for everything from *ET* to *Star Wars*, *Blade Runner* to *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, Struzan's fusion of romance and realism defined the iconography of these films as much as anything contained in the celluloid itself.

It's a fond, respectful tribute, marshalling a galaxy of collaborators and admirers. Spielberg admits, “I have to live up to his art,” while Michael J Fox decodes Struzan's lively brushstrokes as being like warpaint on the face of Indiana Jones. Struzan himself emerges as heroically modest.

**EXTRAS:** None. **Nick Setchfield**

## The Haunting Of Black Wood

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2011 | 15 | DVD



### THERE'S AN

initial creak of cliché about this one – but it's deceptive. Three strangers meet at a secluded cabin in the kind of remote woodland where vengeful spirits swap tourist-slaying tips with axe-crazed hillbilly psychos. Who are they? Why are they there? What's their life expectancy? By the time one of them declares, “I'm in the third ring of Hell” you may think you have this modest little horror rumbled.

Then, to its credit, it does something rather more interesting, revealing itself to be a *Twilight Zone*-style chamber piece, more interested in the interplay of its protagonists than threatening their body parts. To say any more would spoil the twist, but this ends up as a considerably smarter proposition than it first appears.

**EXTRAS:** None. **Nick Setchfield**

## Hardware

Scrapheap Challenger

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1990 | 18 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director: Richard Stanley

Cast: Stacey Travis, Dylan McDermott, John Lynch, William Hootkins, Iggy Pop



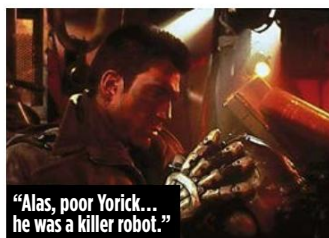
### THE PLOT OF

this cult robo-thriller is nothing to write home about. In a post-apocalyptic landscape, a

scavenger finds the broken remains of a robot. He sells them to a junk dealer and the knackered droid ends up in the hands of artist Jill. It's not long, however, before it repairs itself and rampages through her flat.

It's a classic B-movie synopsis, with more than a dash of *The Terminator* in its DNA. Female protagonist? Deadly droid? Not much of a budget? All check.

What is remarkable is how good the film looks. Reportedly made for \$1.5 million, it's incredibly stylish. Everything is suffused in a chemical orange. Steel works line the horizon. The technology is chunky and basic, and you can practically feel the



“Alas, poor Yorick... he was a killer robot.”

layers of dust. Crucially, the droid itself is a menace of whirring drills and probing wires.

The decision to set the film largely in one apartment, while surely down to economics, only aids the claustrophobic atmosphere. Cameos by Iggy Pop and Lemmy (as a taxi driver listening to Motörhead!) and a pulsing soundtrack add to the industrial punk vibe.

It's not quite the lost classic that its most ardent fans would have you believe – it's predictable, and some of the acting is iffy – but there's a lot to love in *Hardware*'s barren future.

**EXTRAS:** Disappointingly, given that this is a 25th Anniversary Edition, just two art cards by 2000 AD artist Clint Langley. **Will Salmon**

**?** Writer Steve McManus and artist Kevin O'Neill later won a case which found that the film drew on their 2000 AD story “Shok!”

## Doc Of The Dead

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 23 February

2014 | E | DVD



### ATTRACTIVELY

illustrated with copious clips, this zombie documentary ticks all the boxes, not only providing an overview of the development of the genre but exploring the undead's broader cultural ascendancy – zombie-themed ads, flash mobs, porn spoofs and so on. Matters such as the “slow vs fast” debate are also tackled.

The rollick of interviewees is impressive, encompassing the likes of George Romero, Simon Pegg and Robert Kirkman – although only the reliably contrarian Alex Cox has anything particularly original to say. Hardcore Z-heads are unlikely to learn much, but there's enough fun material in-between the talking heads – footage of a zombie wedding; dramatic sequences which poke fun at the genre's absurdities – to ensure even know-it-alls are entertained.

**EXTRAS:** None. **Ian Berriman**

## The Rendlesham UFO Incident

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 9 February

2014 | 15 | DVD



### SHAME

director Daniel Simpson didn't resist production company demands to adopt the found-footage format.

For beneath the tired tropes, there's an interesting film struggling to get out here.

It takes inspiration from 1980's infamous UFO sightings in Rendlesham Forest, but fast-forwards to the present day as three treasure hunters enter the spooky Suffolk wood, constantly squabbling before predictably getting lost. Danny Shayler's Jake is so irritating you can't wait for him to be eaten by bug-eyed aliens.

It concludes with some nifty *CE3K*-style pyrotechnics, and you can only wonder about what might've been if they'd left that bloody camera at home.

**EXTRAS:** Making Of; deleted scenes; music video. **Stephen Jewell**



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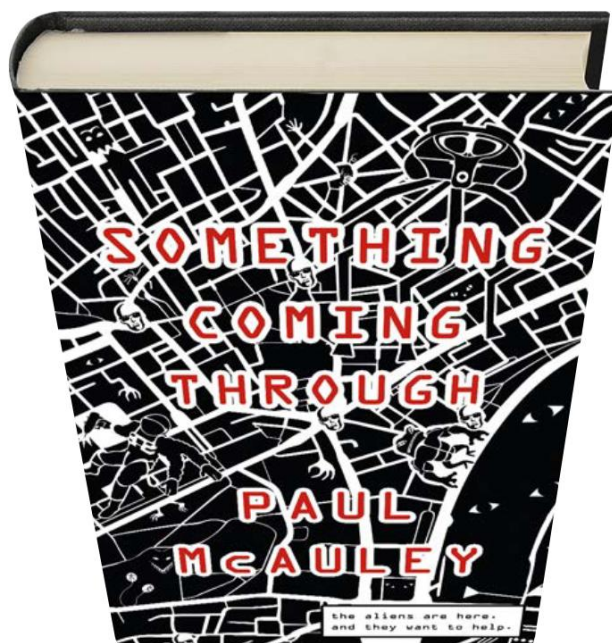


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# Something Coming Through

First contact problems

★★★★★

**Release Date:** 19 February

384 pages | Hardback/ebook

Author: Paul McAuley

Publisher: Gollancz

## BRITISH AUTHOR PAUL

McAuley has long been a critical darling. His backlist comes with a host of awards – the Philip K Dick, the Arthur C Clarke, the John W Campbell, the Sidewise, the British Fantasy – and this new novel itself grows out of an award-winning short story.

McAuley's major work over the past half-decade has been the Quiet War series, hailed for its reimagining of the science fictional solar system, based on findings from recent space-bound probes. The end of that sequence, though, signalled a return to Earth and more immediate concerns. "The Choice", in US zine *Asimov's* (February 2011), took up this theme: it's set in a near-future UK reeling from climate change, visited by aliens offering to help.

Nothing, of course, is as simple as it seems: McAuley described *Something Coming Through* on his blog as an exploration of "the

strangeness of incipient futurity turned up to 11", and so it proves. Set 13 years after the arrival of the aliens, known as the Jackeroo, it's a powerful examination of both the physical effects of the alien tech and the psychological legacy of first contact on an already damaged human society.

The consequences of the alien tech have been unpredictable and not wholly successful: creatures introduced to combat pollution have turned into invasive species; alien artefacts have changed people physically and mentally, causing them to see "ghosts" or speak in tongues. "Ever since First Contact," says one character, "our minds have been altered by alien memes and ideations." In a way that echoes the legacy of first-world meddling (both imperialist and more well-meaning) in poorer nations, humanity is at the mercy of cultural forces it can't control; for every problem the tech solves, a new one is created.

The novel tells two intertwined stories in alternating chapters. In the first, Chloe Millar, agent of a corporation that collects fragments of Jackeroo technology, dodges

political separatists, shady police and social media opprobrium as she hunts an orphaned child with an uncanny insight into the landscape of an alien planet. In the second, Vic Gayle, a detective living on Mangala – one of several habitable worlds gifted to humanity by the Jackeroo – investigates the murder of a recent immigrant from Earth.

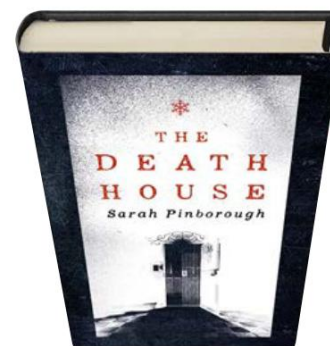
The storytelling style is punchy, thoughtful, and sometimes playful. Vic's half, in particular, has fun with crime drama touchstones: Vic repeatedly calls himself "a murder police", recalling *The Wire*, Mangala's criminal bosses have the air of Guy Ritchie gangsters about them (and one is a fan of *Revolver*), and a minor character called Mikkel Madsen represents the Scandinavians. But alongside the chase sequences, investigations both conventional and unconventional, and sometimes brutal violence, the novel is grounded by a host of dusty, grimy detail that makes its worlds feel both lived in, and elevated by a focus on the bigger questions behind its scenario. Are the Jackeroo's intentions and methods benevolent? Does "benevolence", as humans understand it, have any meaning when applied to extra-terrestrials? And what does being shepherded by aliens ultimately mean for humanity's moral character and free

**The novel is grounded by a host of grimy detail that makes its worlds feel lived in**

will? The plot puts these questions into action in enjoyably subversive ways: faced with technology that manipulates its users' psyches, it's increasingly difficult for the characters to be sure how much agency they really have. Are they the heroes of their own stories, or just pawns being made to *think* they're heroes?

All this, and a fast-paced crime thriller too. McAuley's latest is smart, it's challenging, and as an exploration of the social consequences of sudden science fictional change, it's very impressive indeed. **Nic Clarke**

Paul McAuley was a lecturer in botany at St Andrews University during the '90s, before becoming a writer full time.



# The Death House

It's not easy being teens

★★★★★

**Release Date:** 26 February

288 pages | Hardback/ebook

Author: Sarah Pinborough

Publisher: Gollancz

## GROWING UP IS HARD,

especially for teenagers. Life is already tough without hormones playing merry hell with your mind and body. For the kids in the Death House, that's just the start of it. Toby and his friends suffer from a rare genetic defect that could erupt at any time with deadly results. Until then, they live out their lives in an isolated, island-based school/prison under the watchful gaze of Matron. But are the nurses helping the sick, or hurrying them to an early grave?

The title and gloomy cover design all prime you for a major downer, but the sweetest surprise about *The Death House* is how likeable it is. That's down to its flawed, believable characters. Toby reads like a real teenage boy. He's surly, selfish, obsessed with sex... but also a loyal friend, and generally decent. His friends (and enemies) are similarly well-drawn.

That's good, because this is not a book for lovers of plot. There are enough developments to keep things moving along, but if you're expecting a twisty narrative, look elsewhere. The science fiction elements are present, but downplayed and mostly there for atmosphere. Instead, Sarah Pinborough's prose is focused on character and the theme of living with your own mortality. It's heavy stuff, but handled deftly. And while romance and teenage angst runs through the novel, it's far from mawkish. Impressive and moving. **Will Salmon**

Pinborough spent much of her childhood in boarding schools, which no doubt helped when writing *The Death House*.



# Trigger Warning

A gallimaufry of Gaiman

★★★★★

**Release Date:** OUT NOW!

352 pages | Hardback/ebook

Writer: Neil Gaiman

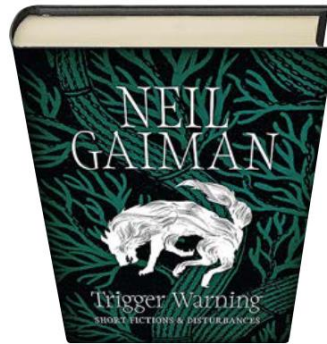
Publisher: Headline

## PART OF NEIL GAIMAN'S

introduction to this book is headed "General Apology" and states that short story collections "should not, hodgepodge and willy-nilly, assemble stories that were obviously not intended to sit between the same covers," before admitting that "This collection fails this test."

*Trigger Warning* is a compilation of stories and poems written for anthologies, magazines and so on – plus one all-new story.

That said, it's unlikely you will have everything else, and it's much neater to have it all in one volume. This collection includes fantasy, SF, horror and even some straight fiction; tributes to Ray Bradbury, Jack Vance and Harlan Ellison; and adventures for Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Who. There's even a sort of



superhero origin story for David Bowie. And the short form suits Gaiman especially well – the plotting in his longer works can be a little wayward, while here he seems freer, able to unfold an idea in however long it takes, then clear the stage for a new one.

The book gets better as it goes along. Early entry "The Truth Is A Cave In The Black Mountains...", for instance, ties up well but is baggy in the middle. But "Orange" – a story of

alien incursion, told entirely in answers to a written questionnaire – is brilliant, and by the Sherlock Holmes story "The Case Of Death And Honey" – in which the great detective attempts to solve immortality – the collection is hitting its stride. "Click-Clack The Rattlebag" is a lovely horror short, while "Pearls" and "The Return Of The Thin White Duke" apply Gaiman's love of refashioning myths and fairytales in surprising ways.

The *Doctor Who* story, "Nothing O'Clock", boasts a perfect *Who* concept that plays out with humour and terror. Finally the one all-new story, "Black Dog", revisits Shadow from Gaiman's novel *American Gods* and is the best of them all: a vivid tale of hauntings and betrayal that unfolds with precision and economy.

As per Gaiman's apology, this can never be an outstanding short story collection because it can't become more than the sum of its parts. Yet it's still an essential purchase for anyone who loves Gaiman's work, and not just for reasons of completism: he's frequently on top form here. **Eddie Robson**

Also out now: a CD of the recent Radio Four adaptation of *Good Omens*, Gaiman's 1990 collaboration with Terry Pratchett.

## BULLET TIME

A BOOK IN BULLET POINTS

### ARROW: HEROES AND VILLAINS

**Release Date:** OUT NOW!

176 pages | Paperback

Author: Not credited

Publisher: Titan Books

- A glossy guide to the characters from the Warner Bros show.
- Features plenty of full-page, photoshopped-to-perfection shots of good-looking actors.
- Covers everyone from the major players to one-night-only baddies like mob enforcer Nick Salvati and assassin Al Owl.
- "Fact Sheet" boxes note aliases and relationships, and discuss how characters were portrayed in the original comics.
- There are a handful of behind-the-scenes insights scattered throughout, in the form of interviews with producers Wendy Mericle and Marc Guggenheim.
- But mostly it's pretty eye-glazing so-and-so-did-this-then-did-that-then-that stuff.
- This sort of thing seems a teeny bit pointless in the age of regularly updated wiki pages.



## The Chimes

Musical Mystery Tour

★★★★★

**Release Date:** 12 February

291 pages | Hardback/ebook

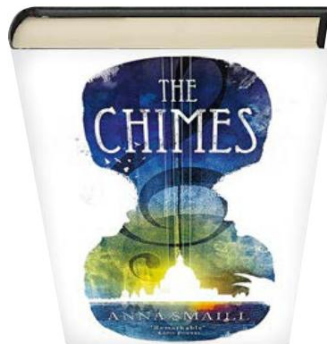
Author: Anna Smaill

Publisher: Sceptre

## WITH THE SEQUEL TO

Samantha Shannon's similarly located *The Bone Season* also recently released, you have to wonder what it is about London and Oxford. But set in a post-apocalyptic future where music has replaced the written word and people carry around bags of trinkets to remind them of the past, *The Chimes* is more *The Drowned World* than *His Dark Materials*.

The spirit of JG Ballard looms large over the New Zealander's debut as she evocatively paints a society where the sinister Order have used a huge musical instrument, the Carillon, to render the populace amnesiac. Centring on young Simon Wythern, it begins with the orphan journeying to the capital, where he joins a band of scavengers lead by the Fagin-esque Lucien. Boasting a secret of his own, Lucien realises the significance of Simon's unique ability to remember and the pair



embark on a voyage up the Thames to the Order's Oxford base...

The plot is slim, and you never really sense that the characters are in any great peril, but Smaill draws you into her vividly created environment with characters like the tragic Clare, who can only keep track of time by self-harming. She also has so much fun reinventing familiar London landmarks, from Dog Isle to Green Witch, that it's almost a shame when the narrative leaves the city behind. For a story about music, *The Chimes* is a triumph on the printed page.

**Stephen Jewell**

The *Chimes* is Anna Smaill's debut novel, but she previously had a collection of poetry published, back in 2005.

## Guns Of The Dawn

Stepping out of the Shadows

★★★★★

**Release Date:** 12 February

700 pages | Hardback/ebook

Author: Adrian Tchaikovsky

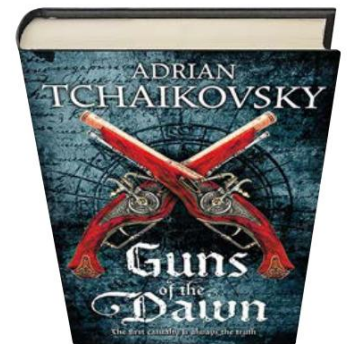
Publisher: Tor

## ADRIAN TCHAIKOVSKY'S

latest fantasy novel leaves behind his popular *Shadows Of The Apt* series. The author's working title for *Guns Of The Dawn* was *A Woman's War*, and this neatly sums up a story that Tchaikovsky describes as "Jane Austen meets Bernard Cornwell by way of Ursula le Guin" – a heady mix of romance, muskets and magic.

Emily Marshwic is the woman in question, drafted into a civil war against the neighbouring Denlanders because all the able-bodied men have already been called to fight. She leaves behind two sisters, a big old house and the unwanted attention of the slimy Mr Northway, swapping them for a swampy battlefield, slow-firing muskets and mysterious warlocks. For the latter, think Mr Darcy with fireballs.

*Guns Of The Dawn* is slow to ignite, more plodding *Pride And Prejudice* at first than Cornwell's



*Sharpe*. But once the musket balls start to fly, Tchaikovsky weaves together a story that keeps you hooked with breathless battle scenes, well-drawn characters and an uneasy feeling in your gut that while Marshwic and her red-coated comrades are winning battles, they're slowly losing the war.

Don't balk at the mention of romance – it's a small part of the story and is as primly and properly handled as in any of Austen's tales. Or "plodding". Judge this book by its first 160 pages and you'll miss out on an engrossing story, beautifully told. **Dean Evans**

Tchaikovsky's dream casting includes "Robert Carlyle as tattooed scout and general lunatic Master Sergeant Mallen".



## Those Above

A touch of class

★★★★★

**Release Date:** 26 February

410 pages | Hardback/ebook

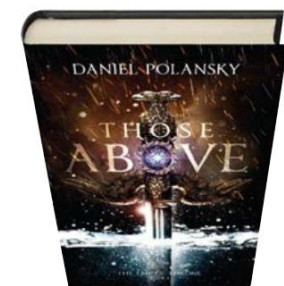
Author: Daniel Polansky

Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton

### CLASS IS A CONCEPT THAT

epic fantasy often avoids dealing with – after all, why talk about real social issues when there are quests to complete and dragons to fight? However, one interesting side effect of the recent darker strain of fantasy epics is that authors are increasingly engaging with political ideas, and the latest example is the gripping new novel from Daniel Polansky, author of the acclaimed *Low Town* trilogy.

This first of the Empty Throne series, *Those Above*, is set in a world where most of humanity has spent the last 3,000 years under the rule of a group of near-immortal beings. All civilisation is now subject to the needs of “Those Above”, but rumblings of discontent and rebellion are happening, and a number of characters find their fates intertwined with their rulers – including a violent young criminal, and the only warrior to ever defeat



an immortal in single combat...

Polansky has pulled off a polished fantasy thriller that's very much in the George RR Martin/Joe Abercrombie vein, but has still given the book its own distinctive style and voice, alongside plenty of evocative world-building. As with most opening volumes, much of *Those Above* is stage-setting for what's to come, but the various character conflicts are already intriguing, and there's also some powerful subtexts about social barriers between the haves and the have-nots. If Polansky can keep exploring this kind of relevant material, the Empty Throne looks set to be a fascinating and provocative saga. **Saxon Bullock**

Also recently released: “A Drink Before We Die”, an ebook short story set in the world of Polansky's *Low Town* trilogy.

## Signal To Noise

That old black magic

★★★★★

**Release Date:** 12 February

271 pages | Paperback

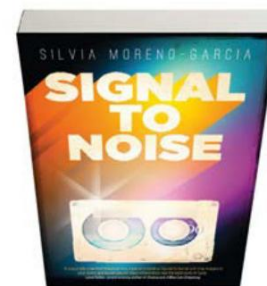
Author: Silvia Moreno-Garcia

Publisher: Solaris

### WHEN IT COMES TO

written science fiction, novels are only half the story. Many authors spend years honing their craft in short stories before their books appear in your local Waterstones; many continue producing short fiction throughout their careers, in magazines like *Interzone*, or websites like *Clarkesworld*, *Strange Horizons* and *Tor.com*. And some of the most celebrated genre writers of the past decade or more, like Ted Chiang and Kelly Link, have never published novels at all (or yet, in Link's case).

Silvia Moreno-Garcia has a plethora of short stories to her name, so while this is her debut novel, she certainly can't be branded a novice writer. *Signal To Noise* centres on Meche, a software engineer who returns home to Mexico City for her father's funeral, and comes face-to-face for the first



time in several decades with the friends who – as we see in a series of lengthy flashbacks – once helped her experiment with dangerous magic.

As both teen and adult, Meche is a vividly drawn character: abrasive, passionate, and damaged, with a voice like “caramel-coated razors” (one of several great turns of phrase) when she's angry.

Suffused with the music – English-language and Spanish, pop and punk – that Meche and friends use to make their magic and soundtrack their lives, this is both a spiky coming-of-age tale and a charmingly sweet romance of making amends and starting again.

**Nic Clarke**

Moreno-Garcia has made a YouTube playlist of songs from *Signal To Noise*; you can find it at <http://bit.ly/signalyoutube>.

## Finn Fancy Necromancy

Fantasy flashback

★★★★★

**Release Date:** 13 February

400 pages | Paperback

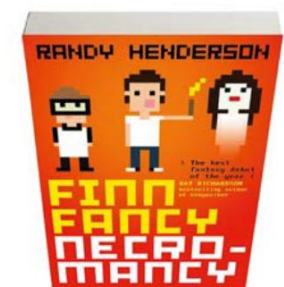
Author: Randy Henderson

Publisher: Titan Books

### EIGHTIES NOSTALGIA IS

big lately, with books like *Ready Player One* giving SF fans in their thirties and forties the chance to relive their childhood in imaginative ways. In order for this nostalgia to work, however, it needs to be linked with sharp and engaging storytelling. That's where new fantasy comedy *Finn Fancy Necromancy* trips itself up.

The offbeat plot follows Finn Gramaraye, who was an up-and-coming teenage necromancer in 1985 before he was framed for a crime he didn't commit and exiled from the mortal world for 25 years. Now he's returned to our reality having missed a big chunk of history, but almost immediately walks straight into another magical crime. Whoever framed him in 1985 may have been a member of his family,



and Finn's troubles are soon getting progressively worse...

Author Randy Henderson has fun with the book's plentiful '80s pop culture references, but at heart this is an ultra-traditional urban fantasy tale that covers material we've seen many times before. The mystery starts well but quickly runs out of steam, while Henderson fails to make much of Finn's fish-out-of-water status, instead concentrating on over-familiar fantasy worldbuilding. By the time the mystery has been solved, most of the comedy has fallen flat, the '80s references have gotten repetitive, and this self-consciously quirky fantasy has worn out its welcome.

**Saxon Bullock**

Henderson was binge-watching *Arrested Development* when he started the book; it may have influenced Finn's crazy family.

## The Great Zoo Of China

Jurassic Farce

★★★★★

**Release Date:** 12 February

515 pages | Hardback/ebook

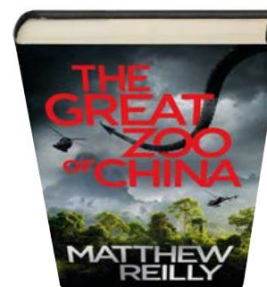
Author: Matthew Reilly

Publisher: Orion

### MATTHEW REILLY SAYS

that he's “The world's biggest *Jurassic Park* fan.” We believe him, because this is the world's biggest piece of *Jurassic Park* fan fiction. It's like he put a piece of tracing paper onto his telly.

The plot follows a mixed group of experts, journalists and social media gurus as they explore The Great Zoo – part of China's attempts to be as culturally significant as their rival superpower, America, via their very own Disneyland. As in *Jurassic Park*, the experts are mischievously kept in the dark as to the zoo's real nature. As in *Jurassic Park*, their jaws drop as the truth is revealed – dangerous, giant, lizard-like beasts (here, there be dragons) have been bred in captivity for entertainment. As in *Jurassic Park*, things go wrong.



Reilly's argued that because his story encompasses “The geopolitics of China” it's original, but actually all that does is highlight the irony of what he's doing. The book comments on China's reliance on outside agencies: “It has nothing of its own. It makes other people's stuff.” We imagine Michael Crichton would agree that's a bad thing.

After a decent build, the narrative descends into one long chase sequence that's as boring to read as it was exciting to watch. The picture-book politics, gory violence and swearsy dialogue mean you can't even give this to kids, making us wonder who exactly it's for. Aside from the world's biggest *Jurassic Park* fan, obviously. **Sam Ashurst**

Matthew Reilly collects movie memorabilia. His collection includes a life-size replica of Han Solo in carbonite, and a DeLorean.



## Cannonbridge

Literary trickery



**Release Date:** 12 February

208 pages | Paperback

Author: Jonathan Barnes

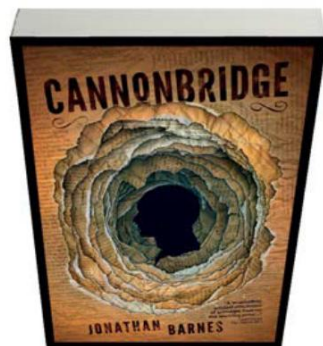
Publisher: Solaris

### MATTHEW CANNONBRIDGE

is the world's best loved author. Wait, what do you mean you've never heard of him? He was at the villa in Geneva where Mary Shelley dreamed up *Frankenstein* and he wrote *The English Golem*. He was friends with Dickens. He conferred with Arthur Conan Doyle while writing about the infamous detective, Monsieur Dupin. Cannonbridge! No?

No. Cannonbridge is an invention. Not just for this novel, but in the world of the novel, too. Someone's been changing history, inserting a new writer into the canon. And while making up Victorian authors might not seem like a particularly dastardly plan, it has nasty side-effects. Cannonbridge isn't just a man. He's something else...

With a deft narrative woven smoothly through history, Jonathan Barnes's novel is both smart and creepy. Back in the 1880s, a shadow



hangs over Cannonbridge; in modern-day London, a professor who suspects the truth finds himself in mortal peril. The dark forces at work here are seriously dark, and properly mysterious, too; the conspiracy is so bizarre it'll keep you hooked to the very end.

There's something gleefully nerdy about the way so many famous authors are drawn into the story, and there's a wicked satirical sense of humour underneath the narrative. Cannonbridge the writer might not be real, but Cannonbridge the novel deserves to become well-known.

**Sarah Dobbs**

Also recently out, and written by Jonathan Barnes: *The Judgement Of Sherlock Holmes*, a box set of four audio adventures.

## Of Bone And Thunder

Fantasy gets napalmed



**Release Date:** 6 February

614 pages | Paperback

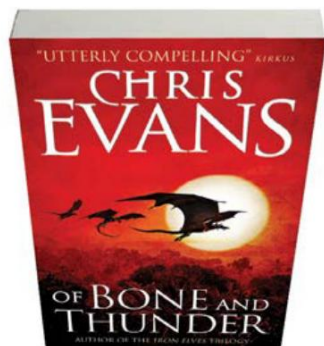
Author: Chris Evans

Publisher: Titan Books

### THIS BOOK SHUNTS THE

Vietnam war into an alternate world where napalm is replaced by dragonfire, soldiers fight with crossbows and catapults, dwarves are the angry racial underclass and magic is a tool of cutting-edge army research. For all that, though, it's still clearly 'Nam. The wide-eyed, patriotic boys rapidly become grunts off-their-heads on drugs and atrocities, in a war without shape or meaning. Like many Hollywood 'Nam films, it's all told from the POV of strangers in a foreign land. The locals are inscrutable; instead of "gooks," they're "slyts".

The most impressive worldbuilding concerns the dragons (abbreviated to "rags"). They're used both as weapons and transport, but they're explosively dangerous and nauseously uncomfortable.



(Dragonflights involve torrents of puke and urine.) Yet these dumb beasts of burden have an animal nobility, well evoked on the page.

The humans fare less well. There are just too darn many, with their scenes getting in each other's way. Much of the early characterisation is painfully over-obvious. Very slowly, good plot arcs emerge, but the characters themselves aren't strong enough to register. The result is less a novel than a narrative swamp, with several different stories struggling to break free and become better developed books.

**Andrew Osmond**

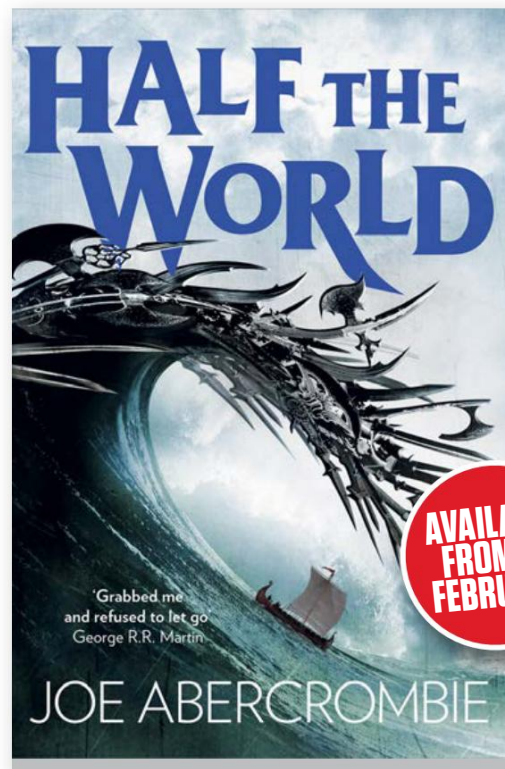
When he's not writing fiction, Chris Evans is a military historian who conducts battlefield tours in Europe.

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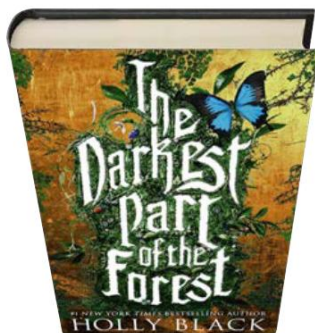
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## The Darkest Part of the Forest

A modern-day faery tale



**Release Date:** 5 February  
336 pages | Hardcover/ebook  
Author: Holly Black  
Publisher: Indigo

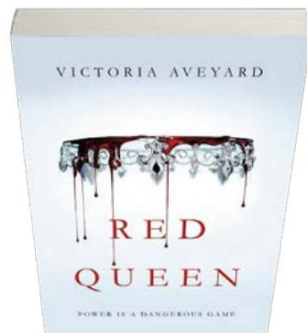
### WHEN IT COMES TO

faeries, there are two types of tale. Some are filled with pretty, friendly flower fairy types. Others talk about dangerous, primal creatures of older legends; faeries who care little for human lives, except when we can amuse them. This is one of those stories.

Hazel and Ben are a brother and sister raised in Fairfold, a town sitting on the edge of the woods where tourists go missing. A faerie prince has slept in a glass coffin deep in the woods for decades, but he's about to be rescued, with dire consequences for the town...

Full of flawed and sympathetic characters from changelings to knights in training, this is a compelling tale of modern-day faeries, growing up and never growing old. **Rhian Drinkwater**

**?** Like to try before you buy? Download the first seven chapters of the book for free: <http://bit.ly/darkestpart>.



## Red Queen

Katniss meets the X-Men



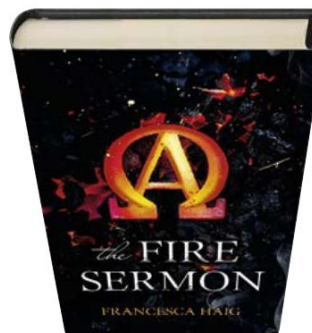
**Release Date:** 12 February  
393 pages | Paperback/ebook  
Author: Victoria Aveyard  
Publisher: Orion

### SOMETIMES YOU CAN CALL

a book derivative and it's an insult, plain and simple: the author has plucked characters, scenarios and ideas from other works and shamelessly Xeroxed them. *Red Queen* is so like *The Hunger Games* you keep wondering when its lead character, Mare, will volunteer as a tribute; meanwhile, the rest of the cast have X-Men-style superpowers. Did we say "shameless"? It is.

However, once you're over your outrage there's a good chance you'll enjoy the result. Mare is a poor street-thief who finds herself working in a palace filled by her world's silver-blooded, heartless rulers, and before long there's a rebellion brewing among her fellow red-blooded humans. It's slick, it's interesting and – at times – gripping. Instead of "rip-off" we'll use the word "homage", then, and let it go. **Jayne Nelson**

**?** Aveyard hadn't even finished writing *Red Queen* when the film rights were bought. She celebrated by... er, buying a desk.



## The Fire Sermon

Post-apocalyptic sibling rivalry



**Release Date:** 26 February  
416 pages | Hardcover  
Author: Francesca Haig  
Publisher: Harper Voyager

### SO MUCH ABOUT THE FIRE

*Sermon* feels familiar: a world devastated by war, where people have regressed to a lower level of technology. People are either privileged, able-bodied Alphas, or Omegas, who are mutated in some way, and repressed. The twist is that every birth is of twins, one Alpha and one Omega, and when one twin dies, so does the other. The story follows Omega seer Cass, whose Alpha politician twin is trying to imprison her to protect himself, as she flees in search of an island ruled by Omegas.

The notion of society splitting into an under- and over-class is nothing new, and an awful lot of recent YA novels have been centred on the struggles of plucky underdogs. That said, what *The Fire Sermon* does, it does well, and it should please *Hunger Games* fans. **Miriam McDonald**

**?** *Guardians Of The Galaxy* co-screenwriter Nicole Perlman is adapting *The Fire Sermon* into a script for DreamWorks.



## Some Fine Day

Won't blow you away



**Release Date:** 17 February  
384 pages | Paperback/ebook  
Author: Kat Ross  
Publisher: Skyscape

### RECENT YEARS HAVE

shown us just how cataclysmic the weather can be, with tsunamis and hurricanes devastating coastal regions. Luckily, such phenomena are confined to the sea, running out of energy when they reach land – but what if they were powerful enough to keep on going?

Here, global warming has led to the formation of hypercanes, super-sized hurricanes that destroy everything in their path. Cadet Jansin Nordqvist has spent her whole life hiding below ground, believing no one could have survived above – but she's wrong.

*Some Fine Day* doesn't have the complexity or ambiguity that raises some YA fiction to literary heights, but then it doesn't pretend to. It is, however, a pacey, easy-to-read tale that can be enjoyed by adults and teenagers alike. **Rhian Drinkwater**

**?** An asteroid hit or underwater supervolcano eruption would be needed to start a hypercane today.

## REISSUES

### DOCTOR WHO: THE HISTORY COLLECTION

**Release Date:** 12 February  
Publisher: BBC Books



Eight rejackets of old *Who* novels, including three by writers who later wrote for the TV show: Paul Cornell, Mark Gatiss and Gareth Roberts. Cornell's is Seventh Doctor story *Human Nature* (1995), later the basis of a David Tennant two-parter. It's an excellent book on its own terms, plus the differences between the two versions are interesting: the original is much darker, and able to give the central love story a bit more depth.

### THE HOUSE OF WAR AND WITNESS



**Release Date:** 12 February  
Authors: Mike, Linda and Louise Carey  
Publisher: Gollancz



This latest team-up by three members of the same family is set in 1740, and follows a company of Habsburg troops sent to protect a village on the Prussian border, which has a haunted great house nearby... We said: "A twisty, gripping, atmospheric tale of supernatural goings-on and some very human clashes of personality. Well-paced, absorbing, and intricately put together."

### THE LAND OF GREEN GINGER

**Release Date:** 5 February  
Author: Noel Langley  
Publisher: Faber & Faber



This charming, dryly humorous children's classic was first published in 1937. It follows Aladdin's son as he strives to find the titular enchanted land (a floating garden, not the street of that name in Hull), and aid a wizard who accidentally turned himself into a tortoise. The narrative voice is appealingly quirky; so are the supporting characters, which include a djinn and a talking mouse. This reissue features the expanded text from 1966, with illustrations by Edward Ardizzone.

### MEMORY OF WATER



**Release Date:** 12 February  
Author: Emmi Itäranta  
Publisher: Harper Voyager



In a climate-changed future Scandinavia where water is rationed and wars are always waging, a young woman in a remote village is learning the rites of the tea ceremony... We said: "A lyrical, reflective story, less concerned with the details of how its dystopian future works than with exploring its effects on those who live in it. Deals more in atmosphere than action, but is no less involving for that."



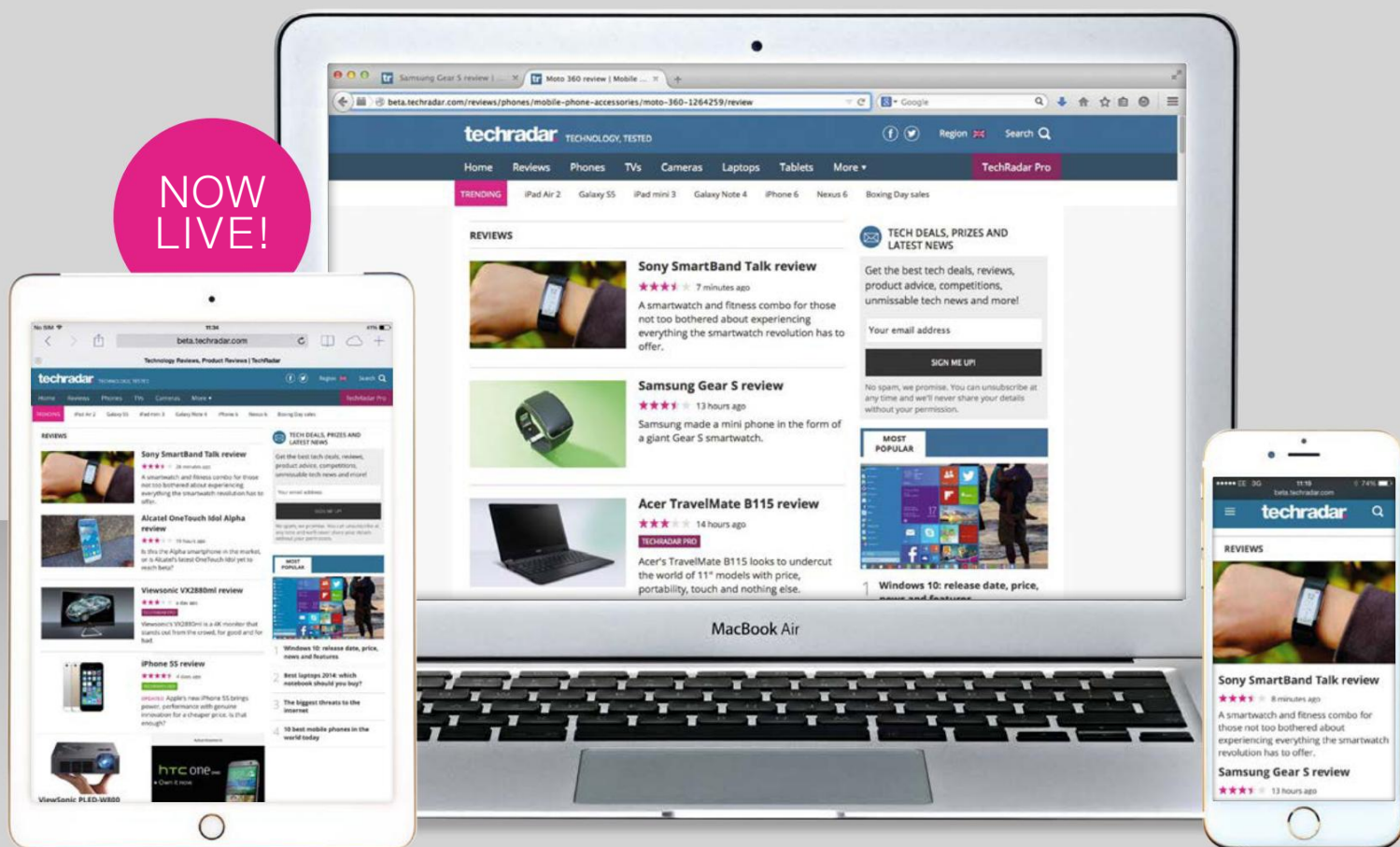
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**FIRST READ**  
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# Of Bone And Thunder

by Chris Evans

**Apocalypse Now meets *The Lord Of The Rings*  
in a bold new fantasy from the acclaimed  
author of the Iron Elves trilogy.**



## THE AUTHOR

Chris Evans is the author of *The Iron Elves* trilogy: *Ashes Of A Black Frost*, *A Darkness Forged In Fire*, and *The Light Of Burning Shadows*. He's a historian as well as an editor of military history and current affairs, having worked with Ballantine/Del Rey of Random House and then Stackpole books where he launched the highly successful Stackpole Military History series. Born in Canada, he now lives in New York City where he writes full time.

**Channelling the turbulent period of the Vietnam War and its ruthless pitting of ideologies, cultures, generations, and races against each other, military historian and acclaimed fantasy writer Chris Evans takes a daring new approach to the traditional world of sword and sorcery by thrusting it into a maelstrom of racial animus, drug use, rebellion, and a growing war that seems at once unwinnable and with no end in sight.**

**S**ON OF A POXY witch.”  
Crossbowman Carnan Qillibrin craned his neck to watch a rag race over the treetops and disappear behind the other side of the mountain. He made out crouched figures on the rag’s back, but he couldn’t see if any were hit by arrows. A billowing stream of gray smoke marked the rag’s passage as a second barrage of arrows arced into the sky. The arrows’ flight grew erratic as they passed through the disturbed air in the rag’s wake.

It was the third rag flight over the mountain today, although only the first to be shot at. Carny thought those were decent odds, but he doubted the higher-ups would agree. With more and more flights coming into Luitox from the Kingdom every day, Red Shield, like all the other shields that made up the second of three javelins in Seventh Phalanx, were being marched ragged trying to find the elusive archers.

With the sun already beginning to fall, all Carny wanted was to get back to the relative safety and comfort of their camp down among the dunes. Being that close to the water and the big sailing ships constantly arriving with more supplies and reinforcements gave him a sense of security completely absent when they went out on patrol.

Tired, thirsty, hungry, and bored, Carny wanted this day to be done. He lifted up the rim of his metal helm and said a silent prayer, hoping they didn’t have to go back up. So a few natives shot a few arrows at a rag. The crafty bastards wouldn’t be there if they went back up. They never were.

Silence reigned as Red Shield waited, strung out a third of the way down the mountain along the main dirt path. It was the one and only way the shield climbed and descended the mountain as the rest of it was a dense green tangle of palm fronds, vines, trees, and leafy plants.

“They’re going to make us go back up, I fucking know it,” Crossbowman Yustace Vooford said from farther up the mountain, spitting the words out. The lanky baker’s assistant-turned-soldier carried a chip on his shoulder as big as one of his bragged-about loaves.

“Keep it down,” Carny said, waving at Voof to lower his voice. “It was a few arrows at most.”

“A few arrows?” Big Hog said, using his crossbow to point up at the mountain. “You might be about the only one of us that can read, but as sure as my crotch itches like a witch’s in a ditch full of thistles, you can’t count.” The pig farmer — large, beefy, and forever red-faced and sweating — shook his head, rattling the chain mail curtain that hung from the back of his helm.

Carny tried and failed to get the image of the itchy witch out of his head. “Fine, more than a few,” he said, lowering his voice in the hope that Big Hog would take the hint. “Still, the rag flew on, so we’re good. Right?” He pushed his helm higher onto his head to allow the air to get at his scalp. The liner slid back, releasing a stream of sweat. Carny wiped his brow with the back of his bare forearm. *I might as well be wearing a damn forge on my head.*



Sighing, Carny bent over and wiped his arm against his dun-colored trouser leg and wished they could take the heavy linen things off. Trousers were too hot for this weather, and the cloth kept getting bunched up underneath the bronze greaves protecting his shins. An oozing rash now covered him from knees to ankles, the yellowy-pink liquid pooling in the bottom of his ankle-high leather boots. That in turn made his feet slip in his boots, spawning blisters on top of blisters.

"We ain't been good since before we got here," Voof said. "I didn't ask to come here and fight in this war. None of us did, but here we are. And why? I'll tell you—"

"For fuck's sake, Voof, leave it for one afternoon, would you?" the Weasel said, emerging from the side of the path while pulling up his trousers. Thin with sharp features and a sharper tongue, Crossbowman Alminga Meerz was the one soldier guaranteed to find the wrong thing to say at the exact wrong time to Voof.

"They'd fucking like that," Voof said, staring hard at the Weasel. "Mark my words, it's what they've always wanted."

Everyone in Red Shield and the Second of the Seventh knew Voof's views on the Kingdom's war in Luitox and the conscription of men into the army. The thing of it was, Voof's views were shared by most, but his seething rage made it difficult to agree with him at the best of times.

Carny didn't bother responding. Voof would rant until he ran out of breath or someone put a fist down his throat. Carny reseated his helm on his head by dropping his chin to his chest and letting the helm fall back into place. Anything that saved a few precious drops of energy was worth its weight in silver. He grabbed the front of his dark green aketon and pulled it away from his skin as he sucked down lungfuls of hot air.

The aketon was more agonizing than listening to Voof. The jacket's thick quilting filled with horsehair provided exceptional warmth, which in this land was like wearing a blanket of coals. Defying the army's dress code, the entire Second Javelin had cut the sleeves from the garment. It was either that or keep passing out from sun vapors. What remained, however, were the eighteen two-inch-by-two-inch steel armor plates woven into the linen casings, which were sewn into the aketon to protect chest and back. It was an additional twenty pounds that Carny would have just as soon done without, but high command would turn a blind eye to only so much defiance.

"Look!"

A single arrow wobbled into the sky from the top of the mountain, trailing a wisp of red smoke. Carny had seen it before.

"The slyts are ghosting," Big Hog said. "Ten to one says half of them will be back down at the beach by nightfall at their little stands selling us that piss beer and dog on a stick."

Carny reached for his neck. Slyt sounded like slit, which always made him picture a thin razor against his throat. Carny figured their nickname came from their greeting I ga slyt, which was really just "hello." Every slyt he'd met always started with I ga slyt. He called them slyts now, too. It was better than trying to learn their fucked-up names.

Carny took it as a cue and turned and started walking down the mountain. As the enemy had so kindly announced their intent to leave it seemed only fair that Red Shield do the same. Other soldiers started to move with him.

"Shield will remain in place!" Red Shield leader Wallseck Sinte shouted, bellowing like they were on a parade square.

"Fucking told you," Voof said.

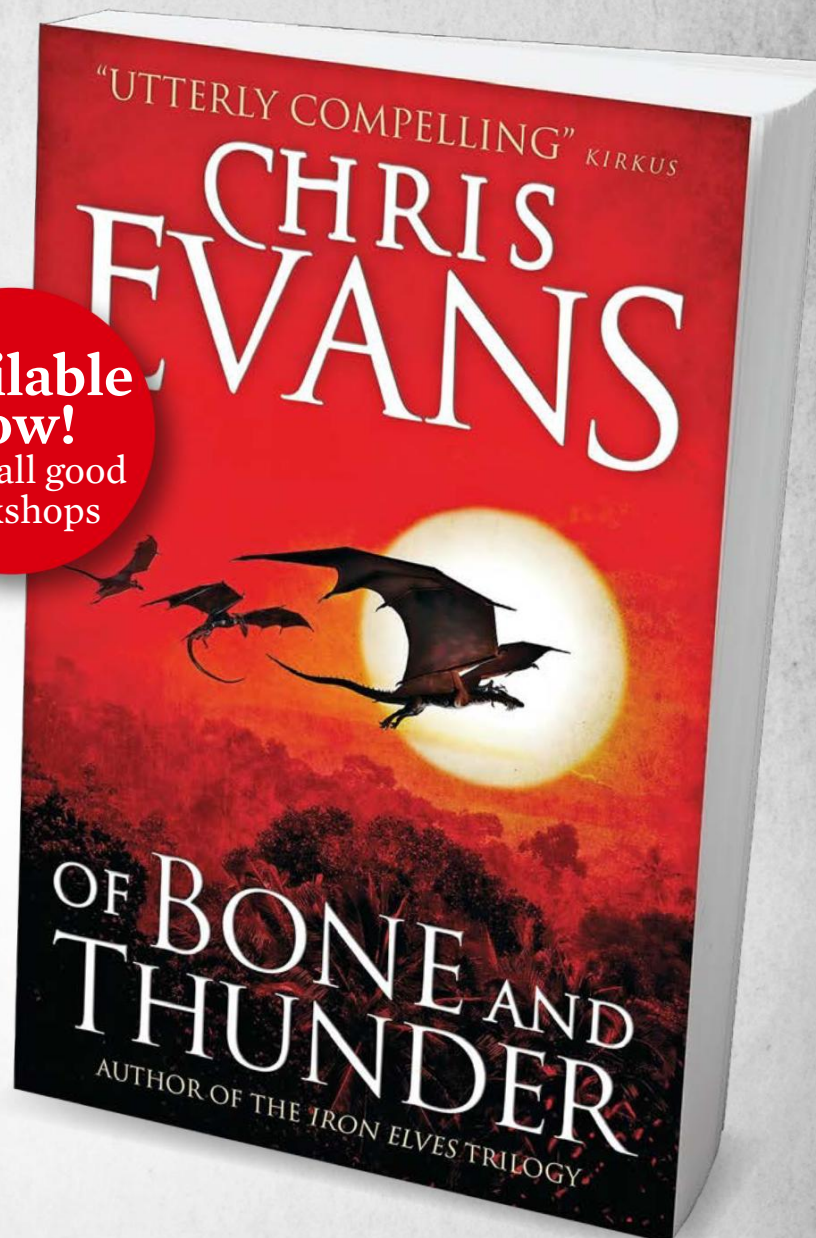
Carny halted. The smell of the sunbaked jungle washed over him and he gagged. It was like breathing in hot dung. You didn't just smell it—you absorbed it. The heat of Luitox did something to the air so that every odor stuck to your skin like putrid honey. He breathed through his mouth and did his best to stand perfectly still.

Salvation, in the form of base camp with its white, sandy beaches; cool ocean waves; and all those eager, lithe whores camped just outside it was only fifteen hundred more yards down this path. Fifteen hundred precious yards.

Carny turned and watched as Sinte came to a halt. Sinte stood upright without leaning against the angle of the mountain. It looked unnatural and it bothered Carny. The rest of Red Shield's twenty-four soldiers, just one of six patrols from the Second Javelin combing the mountain for slyts, were sensibly hunched over as they descended toward the beach, but not Sinte. He wouldn't give the jungle the satisfaction. It was as if he feared one flaw, one deviation, would cause his whole world to crumble. He shaved his square jaw twice a day and his head once. From his polished bronze greaves to the gleaming steel shield marking his authority strapped to his back, he shone like a beacon announcing that wherever he stood, that dirt belonged to the Kingdom. And the Kingdom bowed to no one and nothing.

**To find out what happens next, pick up *Of Bone And Thunder*, out now from Titan Books (RRP £7.99). Ebook also available. [www.titanbooks.com](http://www.titanbooks.com)**

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# BOOK CLUB 111

# Living Next Door To The God Of Love

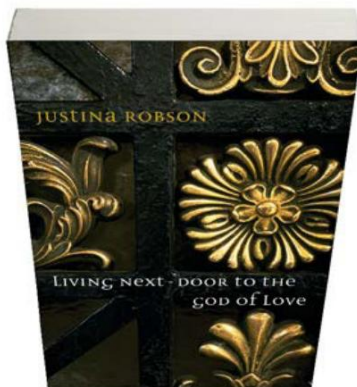
## Justina Robson, 2005

Fantasy author Adrian Tchaikovsky tackles a book with the right Stuff

**I**N 2003 JUSTINA ROBSON brought out *Natural History*, with a mid-transhuman revolution setting that saw tensions drawn taut between dominant humans and the transhuman Forged they made to serve them. Into this conflict comes the discovery of the alien matter, "Stuff".

*Living Next Door To The God Of Love* shares the setting of this earlier book – building on those events but at sufficient distance that it can be read on its own. In *God Of Love* the nature of Stuff is better known. Stuff comes from Unity, a vast multi-dimensional hive-consciousness. Unity wants everything to become Unity, and those who play with Stuff run the risk of becoming just another part of the ever-hungry mass-mind. Why, then, would anyone have anything to do with it? Because it is the Stuff that dreams are made on. From humanity's perspective, Stuff can do anything. Stuff can make whole worlds ("Sidebars") in which people can realise their wildest fantasies.

Francine is a disaffected young woman, tired of her life, alienated from her family, going on the run. It's a familiar-enough start for a book except, here, when she cuts herself loose from her past, it's to the Sidebars she goes, ending up on Sankhara, a "high-interaction" (read: dangerous) beach resort. And there she meets Jalaeka who is, if anyone is, the deity of the title. Because while many of Sankhara's inhabitants are "Stuffies", created to fulfil the needs of its human denizens, Jalaeka is something else again. Jalaeka was born out of Stuff, but he has evaded Unity's embrace and become a rival deity, able to fold and manipulate the universe just as Unity can. Francine arrives in Sankhara to become the catalyst of Jalaeka's showdown with Unity, in the form of its agent and offshoot Theo.



## A complex story with more dimensions than SF usually attains

*God Of Love* is not the easiest read. Robson makes the reader work to understand what is going on: the Sidebars, the transhuman cybernetic Forged existing alongside the Stuffie creatures of myth and magic. The result is a tremendously rewarding experience, a complex, rich science fiction story which has – just as with Unity and its transformations of the universe – more dimensions than SF usually attains.

There can't be many better examples of Clarke's maxim of sufficiently advanced technology being

indistinguishable from magic. The feats that Jalaeka and Theo perform are explicitly presented as magical from the outside. When we share Jalaeka's point of view, however, we see them for what they are: multi-dimensional folding and manipulation of space.

Theo, Unity's stooge, is a creature for whom the universe exists to be consumed. From a dispassionate thing devoid of empathy, human contact and a gnawing envy of Jalaeka's freedom transforms him even as he transforms the world, revealing the truly vile, exploitative core of Unity. Unity loves only itself, and cannot abide the unassimilated other. Jalaeka is its opposite: he exists only for others. It is when Theo attacks those he loves that the gloves come off and he stops running. SF has a reputation for glossing over human relationships. The complex lives and loves of Jalaeka are a tour de force, in turns tenderly human and awe-inspiringly divine, polyamorous, bisexual, genuine and boldly realised. *Living Next Door To The God Of Love* is proof positive that there is no mutual exclusion to an exploration of complex SF ideas and an exploration of human nature and human loves. **SFX**

Adrian Tchaikovsky is the author of the *Shadows Of The Apt* series. His new fantasy novel, *Guns Of The Dawn*, is published on 12 February. Justina Robson's latest novel, *The Glorious Angels*, is published on 19 March. Look out for an interview with Justina in the next issue of SFX.

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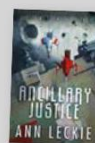
#### The Mirror Empire (Kameron Hurley, 2014)

Clashing worlds, cultures and individual personalities, with an uncompromising take on the great highs and the terrible lows of human nature.



#### Ancillary Justice (Ann Leckie, 2013)

The multi-award-winning SF debut about a warship AI trapped in a human body. Leckie explores how the inhuman can, ultimately, be more human (and humane) than humanity.



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### NEXT ISSUE

Book Club will be Jonathan Green writing about Tim Powers' *On Stranger Tides*.



If you've not read the book before (or you have but you've been waiting for an excuse to read it again) this is your chance to see what a top novelist and other SFX readers think.



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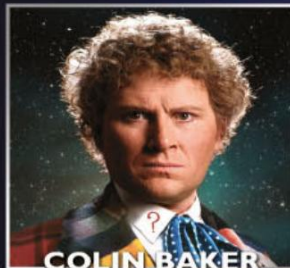
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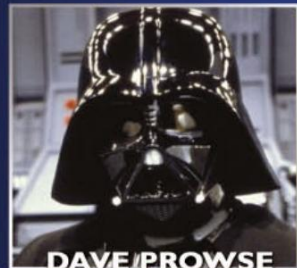
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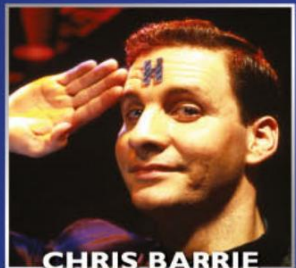
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DOCTOR WHO



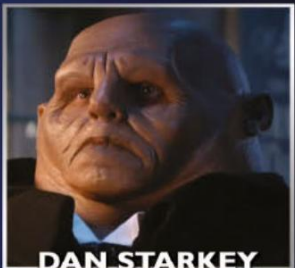
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OVERVIEW

# Spider-Verse

Crisis Of Infinite Spideys

★★★★★

Release Date: **OUT NOW!!**

Publisher: Marvel

Writer: Dan Slott

Artists: Oliver Copiel, Giuseppe Camuncoli, Cam Smith, Justin Ponsor



**IF THERE'S ONE** thing that writer Dan Slott has proved via his current run on *Spider-Man*, it's that he isn't afraid to think big.

This is the man who put Otto Octavius into the role of Spider-Man for a whole year, and also gave everyone in Manhattan spider-powers in the epic *Spider Island* saga. His latest blockbuster shows there are few limits on how far he will go in search of mind-scrambling plot twists.

*Spider-Verse* starts from an attention-grabbing concept: a tale that unites every alternate version of Spider-Man ever seen. And so far, Slott is mostly living up to that enjoyably ludicrous idea. Mixing lively action with Grant Morrison-esque conceptual weirdness, the

story pitches Peter Parker against the Inheritors, a family of trans-dimensional, vampire-like adversaries with full access to the Multiverse.

They're using this to hunt and kill every Spider-powered hero in all realities, but the remaining Alterna-Spideys have gathered together, and it looks like the Peter Parker of Universe 616 (the everyday Marvel Universe) is central to the Inheritors' plans. Throw in the reappearance of the Superior Spider-Man, alongside a roster of weird Spidey incarnations including Spider-Man 2099 and the Spectacular Spider-Ham, and you've got an action-packed saga that doesn't stint on comic-book insanity.

Four issues into the core storyline (currently running in *Amazing Spider-Man*), it's helping that Slott has created a set of entertainingly nasty villains in the Inheritors, giving their twisted family enough depth to be truly scary. Slott keeps the pace lightning-fast and the tone at the correct level between daft lunacy and genuine drama, throwing

in offbeat continuity references and making this a broad but undeniably entertaining slice of superhero nonsense. The main series also features brilliantly polished visuals from artists Oliver Copiel, Giuseppe Camuncoli and Justin Ponsor.

However, while *Spider-Verse* is more accessible to new readers than some recent Marvel event comics, it still suffers from a bad case of Too Many Crossover Issues. The core story regularly branches off into crossover titles when different teams of Spidey alternates head off for separate missions, resulting in moments where it occasionally reads more like an advert for other comics than a story in its own right.

The crossovers and spin-offs themselves are often fun, including the issue that introduced the now phenomenally popular alternate, Spidey-powered version of Gwen Stacy. *Spider-Verse* is a little too sprawling and crossover-dependent for its own good, but despite these flaws it's still a rollicking good time, and proves there are few current writers with as good a grasp as Dan Slott on *Spider-Man*'s unique blend of emotive drama, quick-fire gags and superhero thrills. **Saxon Bullock**

**?** *Spider-Verse*'s version of Gwen Stacy got such a good reaction she's already been given her own series; it kicks off on 25 February.



GRAPHIC NOVEL

## The Sculptor

Comics guru crafts a masterpiece

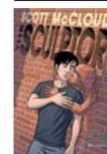
★★★★★

Release Date: **OUT NOW!**

500 pages | Hardback

Writer/artist: Scott McCloud

Publisher: Self Made Hero



**SCOTT**

McCloud's fiction output has been limited of late. This enormous tome is the reason why – it took the *Understanding Comics* author five years to complete.

David Smith is a struggling sculptor. Striking a bargain with Death, David gains mastery of his art, but at a cost: he will die in 200 days. He's fine with that, until a chance encounter with a girl changes his life...

As plots go, it's far from remarkable: Faustian pacts and the redemptive power of love are both well-worn themes. It doesn't matter – McCloud is aiming for mythic storytelling here. While the plot is archetypal, both David and his potential love, Meg, are fallible and believably human. There's a kernel of truth at the core of these characters: in David's arrogance and dedication to a set of ultimately pointless self-imposed rules, and in the deep sadness that underpins Meg's wild-eyed enthusiasm for life.

The script is as lively and funny as it is heart-tuggingly melancholy. McCloud's art, meanwhile, is evocative and restrained. Despite the wild visual possibilities of Smith's power, the most prevalent image is simply him wandering the streets of New York.

The payoff is a little too neatly wrapped up. But the quiet humanity at the heart of *The Sculptor* makes for a graphic novel that's gently romantic, properly hilarious and wince-inducingly relatable to anyone who's ever obsessed over a project. **Will Salmon**

**?** McCloud's first gig in comics was in production at DC, pasting in lettering and whiting out mistakes.



## OVERVIEW

## Wytches

'King scary



Release Date: OUT NOW!

Publisher: Image  
Writer: Scott Snyder  
Artist: Jock

## SCOTT SNYDER'S

love of storytelling started when a summer camp counsellor read him Stephen King's *Eyes Of The Dragon*.

Snyder's debut short story collection, *Voodoo Heart*, was praised by King – with the author selecting two tales for a best American short stories anthology. In 2010, Snyder's first creator-owned comic, *American Vampire*, was published. It was a joint venture with King.

Now, we have *Wytches*, a comic that's the most King-esque creation of Snyder's career. That isn't a



criticism – plot-wise, it's completely original. But in terms of tone and terror, we haven't wanted to hide a horror story in the fridge this many times since *The Shining*.

It follows the Rooks, Charlie (dad), Lucy (mum) and main lead Sailor (daughter) as they move to a new town to escape tragedy. But when Sailor is plagued by visions, it's clear every action has consequences. Something from the family's past is coming back, and it's not happy.

Part of the fun of *Wytches* (though maybe fun isn't the right word...) is

watching awful events unfolding before your eyes. Issue one alone contains two of the most disturbing sequences in comics. Significant intensity comes from Jock's art, which mixes extreme surreal imagery with realistic depictions of horrible things. But this is Snyder's show. Inspired by his experiences of parenthood, it's a deeply personal story that Stephen King would be proud of. **Sam Ashurst**

**?** Brad Pitt's company Plan B has picked up the movie rights to *Wytches*; Snyder and Jock are on-board as executive producers.

## OVERVIEW

## Edward Scissorhands

Makes the cut



Release Date: OUT NOW!

Publisher: IDW  
Writer: Kate Leth  
Artists: Drew Rausch, Jeremy Colwell

## ONE OF THE FEW

Tim Burton films that can still be described as a well-loved classic, the touching and satirical story of *Edward*

*Scissorhands* was never exactly screaming out for a sequel. However, while this comic follow-up could have set alarm bells ringing, what we get is a surprisingly charming and quirky series that already feels like a worthy and satisfying continuation.

The first three issues centre on Megs, the child briefly seen in the movie who was told the story of the lonely, scissor-handed Edward by her grandmother, Kim Boggs. Years later, Megs is now a restless teenager and Kim is long dead, while Edward still lurks forlornly in his dark castle.

When Edward awakens a broken, long-dormant creature named Eli in



the hope of some company, his good intentions lead to dangerous consequences... The events which follow tap into the collision between mundane American suburbia and gothic weirdness that was at the heart of Burton's original.

Drew Rausch's loose, cartoony visuals leave realism behind in favour of a stylised look that's often like a less self-conscious version of Burton's own artwork, while Kate

Leth's script achieves a finely balanced mix of wit, weirdness and melancholy. Whether that balance can be maintained as an ongoing series remains to be seen, but so far this sequel is an accessible and entertaining all-ages comic that's living up to its predecessor.

**Saxon Bullock**

**?** In her teens, Kate Leth was a Burton-obsessed goth. "I probably had seven *Nightmare Before Christmas* shirts."



"Cripes": a good word.

## OVERVIEW

## Sinergy

Jessy The Demon Layer



Release Date: OUT NOW!

Publisher: Image  
Writers/artists: Michael Avon Oeming and Taki Soma

## 2014 WAS A

great year for female-fronted comic books. From the progressive relaunchees of established titles

such as *Ms Marvel* and *She-Hulk*, to fantastic new indie series such as *Copperhead* and *Wicked + The Divine*, last year was strong for the 51% of the population who haven't traditionally been particularly well-represented in the industry.

All of which makes *Sinergy*, launched towards the end of 2014, feel like a bit of a throwback. Ostensibly it's got a strong female lead, but she's so dependent on/reactive to the men in her life, she doesn't feel especially aspirational, or very interesting.

It's a shame. The comic has a great high-concept (especially if you've seen the *Buffy* season two episodes "Surprise" and "Innocence"). Our lead Jess loses her virginity to a boy, then immediately afterwards discovers that he's a demon. Sex causes Jess to gain the powers of a "seer", a select group who can see monsters in disguise. She discovers her father is one too, and he wants her to join the family business – killing monsters.

It's early days for *Sinergy*, so the content may still catch up to the concept. But in the first few issues Jess spends too much time being told what to do by her dad, or moping around over her ex-boyfriend, and not enough developing her own identity.

With animated series-style art and some fun details, *Sinergy* is worth a pull. Let's hope in 2015 Jess finds her own voice.

**Sam Ashurst**

**?** 2001 movie *Frailty* was an inspiration for the comic, while the look of Jess's dad was based on comedian Louis CK.



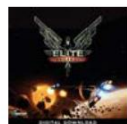
## Elite: Dangerous

When boring is good

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

Format reviewed: Platform PC  
Publisher: Frontier



### ELITE:

*Dangerous* succeeds at much, but it isn't finished. A game of this scale might never

be. Frontier has drawn a line under the game's lengthy beta at a point where it is, arguably, feature complete. It's a space game where you can hunt, trade, pirate, smuggle and explore across a 1:1 model of the Milky Way – but where many of those features lack the depth that might give them meaning, or the variety that might reward lasting engagement.

In part, *Dangerous* is great because it is boring. This is a sim, committed to its own part-science, part-fiction set of rules and mechanics. It's not interested in being a piece of entertainment that you pick up and consume. *Elite*'s Milky Way is a place

that you inhabit, criss-crossed by ships that behave like real machines and governed by systems of trade, law and political power that churn away according to complicated, directorless algorithms.

Other games have attempted the same, but none have approached *Dangerous*' degree of fidelity or visual spectacle. Every player will, at some point, tell the story of the first time they discovered a dying star or saw a capital ship materialise in the middle of a heated battle. You will, whether or not you appreciate it consciously, benefit from the extraordinary attention paid to the little things: docking animations, station detail, utterly extraordinary sound design.

As an MMO (a classification that doesn't quite suit *Elite*, but it's an online-only game) it's reliant on influence percentages and reputation ratings to determine who rules what. Sadly, you personally are unlikely to ever really change anything. Even when the community attempted to force regime change in a system



Could be interpreted as hostile...

through mass intervention, nothing really came of it. The game also needs tweaks to its balance and progression curves, intelligent alterations to the algorithms that generate content to discourage repetition, and a substantial injection of depth into its influence systems. It needs more stuff, and deeper stuff.

But its weaknesses only come to light because of its strengths; *Elite* is

capable of delivering some of the best stories about spaceships that you've ever taken part in. It's a great game and, with time, potentially a classic. Much rests on Frontier's ability to build on these broad but somewhat shallow foundations.

**Chris Thursten**

? This is the fourth in the *Elite* franchise, but the first since 1995's *Frontier: First Encounters*. Which was rubbish.

## Lara Croft And The Temple Of Osiris

A gem of a game

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

Format reviewed: PS4  
Also available on: Xbox One, PC  
Publisher: Square Enix



### FORGET ABOUT

Lara Croft's frowny-browed emotional slog on Coming-of-age Island – this is what *Tomb Raider* is about:

dual pistols, delicious plunder and disturbing the resting places of the dead. The sequel to 2010's *Guardian Of Light* expands on all the good stuff, and even lets you bring two more friends along to help. And by "help", we mean mercilessly betray for gems. Lovely, sparkling gems.

The story is a shortcut to adventure: cursed temples, magic staffs and angry deities. Lara (again voiced by a wonderfully plummy Keeley Hawes) and her rival relic-thief Carter team up with Horus and Isis to take on Egyptian god Set.

It's bobbins, and it absolutely doesn't matter. Anyone who loves this mythology will enjoy the fluff – so basically everyone, then – but the whole thing is just a rip-roaring excuse for fun. Rip-roaring just means "good", right?

This has more in common with *Super Mario 3D World* than it does with the troubled-millionaire

histrionics of *Tomb Raider*. Everything feels satisfying: there's a tactile chunkiness to all that you do. Secondly, it's a cracking multiplayer experience. There's ample opportunity for fun backstabbing: zip-lines can be retracted underneath your tightrope-walking buddies, sending them plummeting onto spikes, and pillars can be magically

raised, trapping them in crocodile-infested waters.

More than anything, it's the puzzles which stand out. Finding new brain-teasers is exhilarating, because you feel a real sense of satisfaction when you solve them. Better yet, puzzles are folded into every part of the game: all the tombs are reached via a central hub, and even this is given an extra twist; day-night cycles and shifting seasons mean it's different every time you visit it.

As well as the puzzling, there are genuine instances of thigh-slapping adventure which perfectly capture the *Indiana Jones* feeling of frantically fleeing from antiquated deathtraps. It's rare for a game to so totally nail a feeling of peril without peppering you with repeated deaths, but this manages it.

When all these things combine, like the scattered body parts of Osiris himself, it forms a positive celestial whole. **Matt Elliott**

? This marks Keeley Hawes's return to the Lara Croft role; her last go at voicing the character was in 2010.



"Um... fancy a pint?"





AUDIO CDs

# Doctor Who

Old books adapted and new short story series

## The Romance Of Crime

★★★★★

**Release Date:** OUT NOW!

129 minutes | £14.99 (CD)/£12.99 (download)  
Publisher: Big Finish

## The English Way Of Death

★★★★★

**Release Date:** OUT NOW!

141 minutes | £14.99 (CD)/£12.99 (download)  
Publisher: Big Finish

## The Exxilons

★★★★★

**Release Date:** OUT NOW!

56 minutes | £10.99 (CD)/£8.99 (download)  
Publisher: Big Finish

## Mistfall

★★★★★

**Release Date:** OUT NOW!

93 minutes | £14.99 (CD)/£12.99 (download)  
Publisher: Big Finish

## Short Trips: Flywheel Revolution

★★★★★

**Release Date:** OUT NOW!

32 minutes | £2.99 (download only)  
Publisher: Big Finish

### TOM BAKER FANS, REJOICE!

Big Finish are bringing us even more Fourth Doctor adventures than ever before, here delivering a triple-load of *Who* audio that showcases Baker's wonderfully eccentric style. It's largely thanks to their continuing series of novel adaptations, which here shift their attention to the trio of mid-'90s books written by new series scribe Gareth Roberts.

Starring the TARDIS crew of the Fourth Doctor, Romana (Lalla Ward) and K-9 (John Leeson), Roberts' three *Missing Adventures* did a memorable job of recreating the offbeat tone of the Graham Williams-produced era of *Who*, and the first two adaptations are out now (with the third to arrive later in 2015). *The Romance Of Crime* begins

with the TARDIS arriving on the Rock of Judgement, a justice station built into an asteroid where criminals regularly meet their end. The Doctor and Romana are soon entangled with an eccentric artist, a troubled investigator, a megalomaniacal killer and a team of lunk-headed Ogrons, resulting in a typically witty (and occasionally violent) mix of adventure, escapes and quick-fire gags.

*The English Way Of Death* (also reissued in paperback this month) maintains the kooky tone, but in a more historical setting, as the Doctor and Romana visit '30s England and encounter a gaseous alien entity named Zodaal with a liking for brain-hungry zombies and a deadly plan that could destroy the world. The comedic tone gets even broader here, with both Baker and Ward giving sterling performances, and the story features an engaging set of bizarre plot twists. As with *The Romance Of Crime*, the balance of frothy comedy and dark horror occasionally falls a little flat, but otherwise these lively adaptations add up to a nostalgic double-bill that no self-respecting fan of classic *Who* should be without.

The third Baker release this month kicks off the latest season of Fourth Doctor adventures, which once again teams him with Leeson as K-9 and Louise Jameson as Leela. *The Exxilons* sees the TARDIS team

getting involved in a confrontation on an unnamed planet between a race of primitive warriors and the technologically advanced aliens who are trying to help them, but

who are also hiding a secret... Anyone familiar with the 1974 TV story "Death To The Daleks" will soon see where this effective drama is heading... *The Exxilons* acts as a great example of a continuity-based sequel, while also finding interesting angles on the Doctor's regular role in negotiating peaceful conflict resolutions.

Over in the regular monthly releases, *Mistfall* begins a new trilogy starring the Fifth Doctor, Nyssa, Tegan and Turlough, as the TARDIS accidentally returns to the mysterious universe of E-Space. The story sees the Doctor and his friends arrive on Adric's home planet of Alzarius, 300 years after his previous visit (in 1980 adventure "Full Circle"), and find a new expedition of arrivals investigating the planet's dangerous ecosystem. Unfortunately,

## Kicks off the new trilogy in a great amount of style

the lethal time of *Mistfall* is nigh, and the expedition is being sabotaged... The gripping story does a good job of mixing sci-fi concepts with thrilling action, and strong performances from the leads help this kick off the new trilogy in a great amount of style.

Finally, Big Finish are also building on their regular print anthologies by starting a new line of download-only audio short stories. The *Short Trips* series begins with *Flywheel Revolution*, a First Doctor adventure narrated by '60s companion Peter Purves set in a bizarre alien junkyard where an abandoned robot has to face off against an unknown monster, and where things aren't entirely what they seem... This engaging, well-crafted tale features strong prose and effective world-building with a nicely retro edge, while also tapping into the themes of co-operation and understanding that are the bedrock of good *Who* storytelling. **Saxon Bullock.**

Also out soon: readings of the novellisation of "Remembrance Of The Daleks" and Eleventh Doctor book *Tales Of Trenzalore*.



# Box Of Delights

What we've been playing with this month

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## 2 TARDIS Purse

Underground Toys | Length: 19cm | RRP: £16.99 |  
FPI price: £14.99 | Catalogue number: C2771

About the same size as the TARDIS was in "Flatline", this embossed bright blue purse will hold more than just psychic paper in its roomy interior. Made of faux leather, with a metal popper clasp and an internal zipper, it'll look after your cash, credit cards, store cards, old stamps and Mission Burrito loyalty cards. Loaded up it could become one mean weapon: we can just see Clara smacking the Doctor round the head with it. An Adipose purse and TARDIS wallet are also available.

## 3 Batman And Aliens Bottle Openers

Diamond Select | Width: 10cm/9cm | RRP: £16.99 each | FPI price: £14.99 each |  
Catalogue numbers: B9895/B8596

Diamond Select's ongoing mission to turn everything in the universe into a novelty bottle opener continues, with two more neat additions to the range. On the left, we have one styled after Adam West's Batarang; on the right, a design based on the pulse rifles wielded by Ripley and co in the James Cameron classic. Both have magnets on the back, for the benefit of people too lazy to walk the two yards from the fridge door to the cutlery drawer. Nice of them to think of us.

## FUNKO PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

## Predator ReAction Figures

Funko | Height: 10cm | RRP: £9.99 each | FPI price: £8.99 each |  
Catalogue numbers: B6974, B6975, B6976, B6977

The galaxy's finest hunter gets the retro treatment, and because these figures are almost identical, you could conceivably use them to make your own stopmotion animation. We say *almost* identical, because the differences are key. Helmet on he looks great, but when it comes off and he opens his mouth, he somehow looks like the happiest Predator alive. Say cheese! The translucent "Invisible" version is the weirdest of the bunch - it wouldn't look out of place as a glass ornament on your nan's mantelpiece.

1

2

4

3

## 4 Star Trek Watches

Zeon | Diameter: 4cm | FPI price: £67.99/£13.99 | Catalogue numbers: B085, B087

Planning a slingshot around the sun to the late 20th century for a crafty spot of whale-napping? You'll need a reliable way to track your travels, and these *Trek*-themed timepieces are perfect for the job. The Enterprise watch turns the primary hull of the NCC-1701 into a stylish clockface, while the rubbery Engineering design opts for red shirt chic, letting you count down your precious moments of screentime before you're vapourised like the glorified extra you are.





## 5 Batman Heritage Collection Vehicles

Hot Wheels | Length: 22cm | RRP: £19.99 each | FPI price: £16.99 each | Catalogue numbers: C4083, C4082

Wholly desirable! Unlike the old Corgi toy, the TV Batmobile die-cast here has no tricks – no missiles or saw-blade – but when you're faithfully replicating George Barris's customised Lincoln Futura, gimmicks are unnecessary. Its stablemate, based on the Burton movies' Anton Furst design, is equally glorious. Both feel sturdy enough to withstand play, should you foolishly let a child get their sticky mitts on 'em.

## 6 Horror Retro Figures

NECA | Height: 19.5-20cm | RRP: £29.99 (Jason/Deadite Ash)/£32.99 (Hero Ash) | FPI price: £22.99/£24.99 | Catalogue numbers: B6418, B8023, B7435

More figures taking inspiration from both children's toys of the '70s and gory horrors of the '80s. From *Evil Dead 2*: Hero Ash, complete with chainsaw, and a possessed Deadite Ash. Hero Ash seems a mite cross-eyed – but that does make him look appropriately bewildered. The latest *Friday The 13th* figure comes from *Part V*, where the villain turns out not to be Jason! Remove the mask to reveal deranged paramedic Roy Burns. All come with neat little accessories like a shotgun, a Necronomicon and a meat cleaver.

## THINGS TO COME

MORE GOODIES COMING YOUR WAY



EXPECT TO PAY  
**£34**

### SERENITY PLUSH

ETA: APRIL

We find the whole "plush spaceships" phenomenon a bit puzzling – who wants to snuggle up with the Enterprise, or a Romulan Bird of Prey? Still, this *Firefly* range also includes a Jayne Cobb, and we doubt many people want to cuddle an Adam Baldwin replica any more either... Eighteen inches across, it comes with little plush shuttles tucked into landing bays on either side.



EXPECT TO PAY  
**£37**

### WEEPING ANGEL BOOKENDS

ETA: MAY

This isn't the first time someone's had this particular idea – Ikon Collectables did a Weeping Angel bookend a while back. But just one of those would set you back a fair bit more than a pair of these. The only thing that rather spoils the effect here is the way they've slapped the legend "Don't Blink!" on the base of the Angels. They'd look classier without.



### WOLVERINE RETRO ACTION FIGURE SET

EXPECT TO PAY  
**£50**

ETA: JULY

Another homage to the Mego toys of the '70s. This figure is the third in a Diamond Select range that also includes Spider-Man and Captain America. The neat touch here is that Wolvie comes with alternate outfits and swappable hands and heads, so that you can dress him up in different duds. Three figures for the price of one!





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# VIEW SCREEN

TV REVIEWS  
AND OPINION



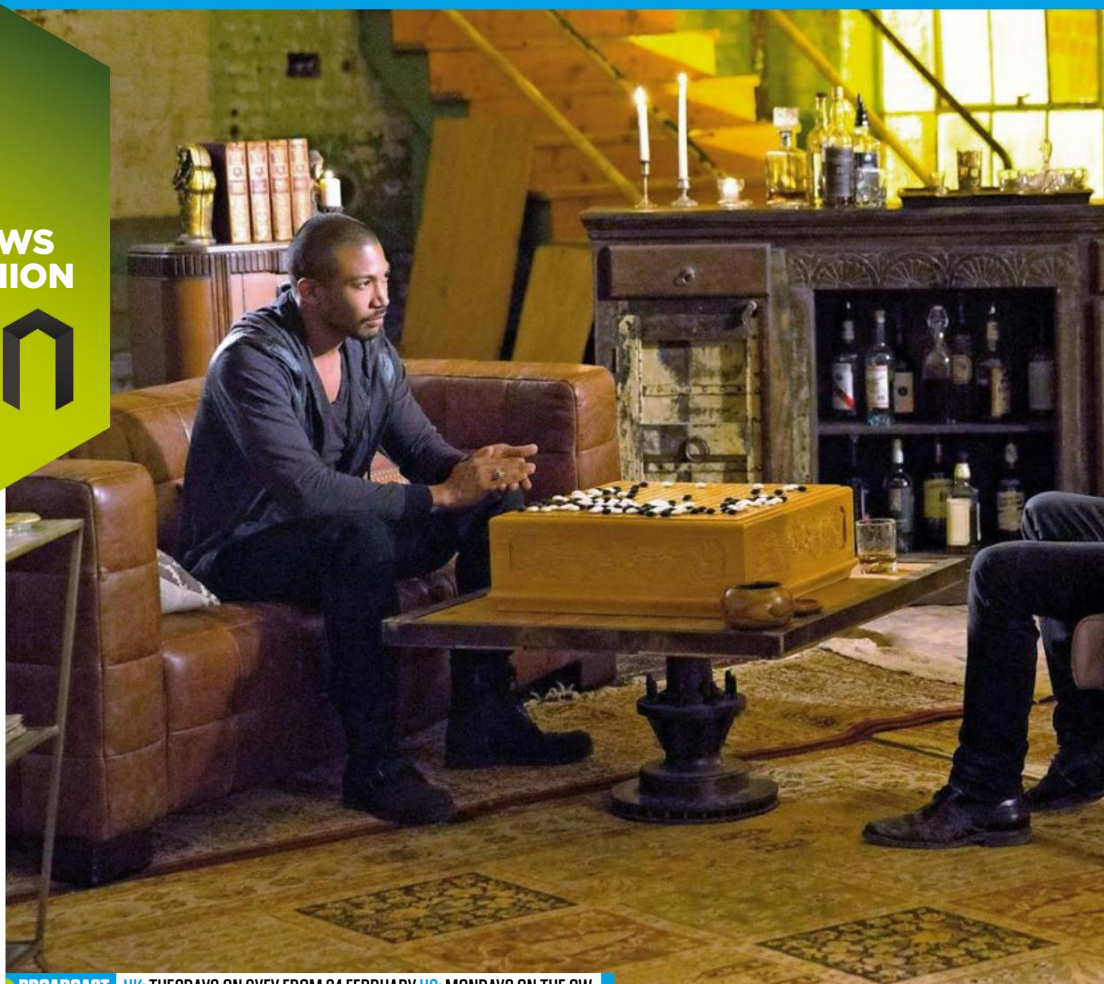
## What's On

What to watch  
when this month

LOOK OUT  
FOR SFX TV  
REVIEWS AT  
GAMESRADAR.  
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- **Mondays** – Rick and co try to keep on surviving, as season five of *The Walking Dead* rises again on Fox from 9 February.
- **Tuesdays** – The Winchesters continue to settle into their new home on E4 in *Supernatural*, alongside the marooned space kids of *The 100*. Meanwhile, *The Flash* kicks off on 10 February on Sky 1 and Halle Berry's astronaut drama *Extant* is joined by the return of *The Originals* on Syfy from 24 February.
- **Wednesdays** – More Canadian time travel shenanigans as *Continuum* continues on Syfy, while *Grimm* tells tales on Watch.
- **Thursdays** – Super-sharp shooting superhero show *Arrow* comes to Sky 1 from 12 February.
- **Fridays** – Get your first glimpse of the rebooted *12 Monkeys* from 27 February on Syfy. How will it fare without Bruce Willis?

Also look out for *The Vampire Diaries* waking from its winter slumbers sometime in February on ITV2.



**BROADCAST** UK: TUESDAYS ON SYFY FROM 24 FEBRUARY US: MONDAYS ON THE CW

# The Originals

Voodoo you think you are?

Between seasons, the *Originals* writing team clearly sat down and decided, "You know what we need? *More Originals*." Of course, the fact that the number of *Originals* is finite (statement pending revision when some hitherto unmentioned brother/sister is revealed) and that many of them were killed off in the course of *The Vampire Diaries* is no obstacle. This is supernatural telly we're talking about here. Resurrection is just another hand-wavy ritual away. Hell, you don't even need to hire the same actors if the particular mode of resurrection you decide upon is shoving someone's spirit into a new body. That even means that vampires can become witches.

*The Originals* continues to be the perfect show for anyone who wants *The Vampire Diaries* with fewer jocks and more jazz. The differences between the two shows are largely cosmetic (a different city, a different soundtrack, a bit more grand guignol horror). In terms of plotting and characterisation they

follow the same blueprint: bickering vampire brothers; women who can't decide which bad boy they like best; plots that fit a season's worth of events into one episode; enemies becoming uneasy allies, and vice versa.

Admittedly, the cosmetic differences are what make *The Originals* the more interesting show at the moment. The New Orleans voodoo vibe helps give the show a sense of edginess missing from Mystic Falls, and the Deep South setting provides a spicier gumbo for the simmering tension between witches, werewolves and vampires.

But with season two, the show seems to be trying too hard to emulate its progenitor in terms of structuring its storylines. There's an "everything plus the kitchen sink" approach – with all the main characters in a constant state

## BONUS FEATURES

● **Kinda Crossover:** Nina Dobrev makes a guest appearance in episode 2.05 but as neither Elena nor Katherine. She's yet another doppelganger – Tatia.

● **It's Wotsisname:** The actor playing Kol's new host body, Daniel Sharman, previously played werewolf Isaac in *Teen Wolf*. If you want to see more of the original Kol (Nathaniel Buzolic) google "The Originals The Awakening" for tie-in flashback eps.

● **In-Joke:** Episode 2.04 is called "Live And Let Die" which just happens to be a James Bond film which is largely set in a voodoo-rife New Orleans.

● **Best Line:** Klaus: "Well, then there's only one question we need to ask, isn't there? Which of our parents do we kill first?"





It's not as good a game  
as chess, anyway.

of *haute tension* – that actively works against the more laidback setting of New Orleans.

So in the first half of the season we have the Originals' mum, the Originals' dad, plus Nicklaus's *real* dad and two more previously defunct Original siblings all resurrected and being dastardly. We have werewolf infighting. We have mini-mighty-witch Davina plotting against Nicklaus. And there's still time for lots of snogging.

There's lots of great stuff here too. Nick and Elijah are both magnificent central characters, with the majority of the best snarky lines. The flashback episodes are far more convincing and atmospheric than they ever were in *The Vampire Diaries*. The cinematography and lighting is emotive and atmospheric. It can genuinely surprise you with a swerve ball revelation or grizzly twist on regular occasions. It feels classy and, well, original besides the increasingly repetitive *Vampire Diaries*.

But it could be even better with a less-is-more approach. Because what gets lost in that constant need to batter the audience with plot developments is one simple, central truth: Nick and Elijah are the best thing about the show. Elijah, especially, is a mesmerising character, partly because of actor Daniel Gillies' uniquely weird body language. Joseph Morgan, meanwhile, has a way of making his mannered insults sound positively Shakespearean.

The show should use these two more. The dynamic between them is far more fascinating than between Damon and Stefan, and could be the key to making *The Originals* truly original. **Dave Golder**

MINDPROBE

# Rachel Nichols

*Continuum's* Kiera Cameron on her mission to save the world...

## Where does Kiera find herself at the start of season three?

Season one was all about Kiera getting home. Season two was Kiera still wanting to get home but acknowledging that she was sent back for a reason, and understanding why she's there. Season three... I call it "For the good of humanity". She makes the decision that instead of sticking her head in the sand, assembling the time-travel device and making it home to the same 2077 that she left, she realises that she's been given this opportunity to enact change for a better future.

## Continuum is very complex: do you get confused by the scripts?

Any time I recommend the show I say, "You can't multitask when you watch this show, you have to pay attention!" Sometimes I'd get a script and think, "Wait a minute!" I'd call creator Simon Barry and say, "Can you explain this to me?"

## The show mirrors so much going on in the real world, particularly in season three...

We're lucky because, being a sci-fi show, we can get away with social commentary and political commentary and nobody gets mad at us for being right-wing or left-wing. The sci-fi genre allows us to tell these very relevant storylines. What I always loved is that in season one, Kiera's world is very black and white: she's good, they're bad. By the time you get to season three the audience has taken this journey with Kiera and the world is not as it seems – she's questioning the decisions she's made: "Wait, am I a bad guy?"

## What is the thing that keeps you going when you've had a really long day on set?

My handsome husband! He comes in and visits me for lunch and hangs out on set. I'm also a big fan of sugar-free Red Bull, as I'm not a coffee drinker! **Jayne Nelson**

*Continuum Season 3* airs on Wednesday nights on Syfy in the UK. The fourth and final season will air later this year.







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BROADCAST UK: WEDNESDAYS ON WATCH US: FRIDAYS ON NBC

Is that David Giuntoli's  
"where was I?" face?

# Grimm

Less *Grimm* now, more *Supernatural*...

**G RIMM IS ONE OF THOSE** "Blimey, is that still going?" shows. Yes it is, and its US ratings are healthy if not spectacular. And it's still pretty much the same as it was when we all tuned in for the premiere and thought, "Not much point investing time in this one... It's got 'Axe Me' written all over it."

So, yes, it's still a monster-of-the-week show with a mythology-based arc story and a huge dollop of domestic melodrama. It still has some of the silliest – and shoddiest – looking creature effects on TV that make it look like a lavish production of *Toad Of Toad Hall*. These monsters – Wesen – still live among us in human form, and can only be seen by a "Grimm" – though only *sometimes* by him and

*sometimes* (under stress or when they allow it or when it's handy to the plot) by all humans. The rules still don't make sense. Nick Burkhardt is still a cop and a Grimm, and David Giuntoli – who plays him – still has the expression of man who only half understands the dialogue he's given.

In season four, some things have changed but not much – all the changes are familiar telefantasy developments. More people know Nick's secret. Parents are being introduced all over the place. More characters with the same "mantle" as the lead character are appearing. Season four starts with Burkhardt powerless

and tutoring a new young Grimm. She's actually a great character, but don't get too fond of her...

And now that the show has apparently run out of credible animals to Wesen-ise (clearly Armadillo Man and Naked Mole Rat Man are too silly even for this show) it's shamelessly going down the *Supernatural* urban myth route with Golem and Chupacabras. There's also a wonderfully bonkers subplot in the early episodes of the season with evil Wesen Adalind subjected to Wes Craven's take on *Alice In Wonderland*. There are some lovely macabre touches here that the show should use more often.

So how has a show that's little more than a smorgasbord of clichés survived so long and developed such a loyal following? Perhaps because it doesn't actually care that it's a smorgasbord of clichés. It just does what it does efficiently. Although the monsters are laughably poor, the rest of the production values are high, the acting is solid, the characters are likeable. Season four is not going to make any new converts, but neither is it going to alienate current fans. **Dave Golder**

## BONUS FEATURES

► **Best Gag In The Making:** Ep seven, "The Grimm Who Stole Christmas", has this exchange between Renard and Nick: "I don't want my mother to kill your mother." "And I don't want my mother to kill your mother." Quite how that didn't descend into a series of "Your mum is so evil..." gags we'll never know.

► **In-Joke:** Two consecutive episodes feature hospital rooms that have the same number as the episode's production code: 404 and 405.

► **Best Line:** Elizabeth (when Nick discovers that to regain his Grimm powers he needs to have sex with his wife while she's been magically altered to look like Adalind): "I would suggest a very dark room."

## YOU HAVE BEEN WATCHING...

## AGENTS OF SHIELD

SFX's Twitter and Facebook followers spout on the Marvel show's second season [MINOR SPOILERS]

► A huge improvement over the first season. Skye is less obnoxious, they're doing much more with Ming-Na Wen and the series is finally embracing its comic book origins.

**Liam Macleod**

► It really helps having a more consistent over-arching narrative. The *Thor: The Dark World* tie-in turned out to be pretty naff, and

obviously now we know this was because of the big reveal in *The Winter Soldier*. But now they are more free, and they know what toys they can and cannot take out of the massive Marvel toy box.

**Alexander Andrew Edwards**

► With ambiguous characters tying up some loose ends from last year, and setting up something that won't come

into the films until 2018 (the Inhumans), this season has delivered on the promise that the back end of season one gave us.

**Andy P Meakin**

► This show has seen an incredible turnaround. I gave up on it half a dozen times in the first half of season one, but everything about it has improved immeasurably.

**Ian Salsbury**

► *SHIELD* continues to be a show that avoids cancellation due to being an hour-long bit of promotional material.

**Belle Tain-Summer**

► An improvement on season one! A bigger team and no dull Tahiti.

**Seb Jowett**

► This season's villain sported the worst cod German accent I've heard since a '70s sitcom,

the fight sequences are all over the place and the plotlines are about as exciting as car rust.

**John Porter**

► Really love how this show is improving. It's a Marvel fix in between the movies and soon to be other series. Coulson is still my hero, even without any powers.

**William Potts**







**BROADCAST** UK: LATER THIS YEAR, SYFY CANADA: SUNDAYS ON SHOWCASE

# Lost Girl

Get ready to Fae goodbye...

**PREPARE TO MOURN: THIS IS** the final season of *Lost Girl*. Some might say it's the perfect time to end the show – quitting while it's ahead, long before the format starts to get tired (although season four wasn't *quite* up to par with its predecessors). Others will simply be heartbroken to lose Bo, Kenzi, Dyson, Lauren

and all the other members of the gang. Either way, we can only hope it goes out on a well-deserved high, as this has consistently been the most bonkers show to ever sneak out of Canada.

As we write this, only four episodes have been transmitted, and so it almost feels a little too early to judge the entire season – but at least those episodes have been good, opening with a fascinating conceit: Bo travels to Valhalla to rescue dead Kenzi, then heads down to Tartarus to meet her stepmother, Persephone (Bo's dad is apparently Hades...). It's amazing to think that the big reveal of Bo's father *still* hasn't happened after playing out for what seems like forever, so we can only

## BONUS FEATURES

► **She'll Be Back:** Ksenia Solo will appear in roughly half of this season's episodes, and will also pop up in season three of *Orphan Black*.  
► **Good Taste?** We discover that Kenzi's favourite Kevin Bacon film is *Footloose*, and her second choice is *Tremors*. We're kind of miffed this isn't the other way around.

► **In-Joke:** There's a running joke in *Lost Girl* that Dyson never knowingly wears a shirt. In a nod to this, in one episode Lauren actually refuses to deal with him unless he puts one on.  
► **Best Line:** Tamsin: "It's your lucky night because my succubus friend got her mojo back and she's hornier than a monkey with eight dicks."  
Bo: "...Or something more feminine."

hope the writers finally deign to bring them together, face to face, by season's end. The downside of this, of course, is that there's absolutely no way her pa will live up to the hype. Fingers crossed.

Another worry occurs at the end of episode two, when things take a depressing turn as Kenzi says goodbye – Ksenia Solo isn't a main cast member any more, having quit to pursue other projects. Kenzi is such a huge part of *Lost Girl* that the loss you feel is intense. Luckily, much of the wit usually delivered by Kenzi seems to have been parcelled out to Tamsin – who teams with Bo to solve crimes, with their bitchy dynamic actually working well – and Lauren, who's at least 80 per cent more lively this season. It's hard to believe she's even distantly related to the drab Lauren of the first two years of *Lost Girl*.

But still, Bo without her Kenzi is somewhat like Captain Kirk not having his Dr McCoy (if that McCoy had killer fashion sense and a tongue sharper than a scalpel). On the plus side, at least we'll have a chance to mourn the loss of Kenzi long before we get to mourn everybody else, spreading the grief to make it easier. **Jayne Nelson**

**BROADCAST** UK: RETURNS TO BBC ONE LATER THIS YEAR US: BBC AMERICA LATER THIS YEAR

# Doctor Who

Why keeping Clara was a smart move for season nine

**AS SOON AS WE HIT THE OLD** Clara scene in "Last Christmas", my heart sank. Not because of the "Ooh Doctor, I'm so very old" make-up, but because I thought I knew what was coming next... One rumour had been doing the rounds: Clara would die of old age with the Doctor at her side. And I didn't want her to go.

That turned out to be misinformation, of course. But caring about Clara? What a turn up! By the end of Matt Smith's final season, I was convinced that New *Who* had cast its first Dodo – a companion so unmemorable she didn't even get a goodbye scene. Jenna Coleman was charming, but the character was generic, her only interesting feature being the mystery around her numerous deaths.

It wasn't until the arrival of Peter Capaldi's

Doctor that Clara finally arrived for me. We finally got to see the character's personality. She's clever, spiky, loving and occasionally exasperated with the Doctor. She likes to have things her own way, which has annoyed a few fans – but don't we all? Crucially, Clara isn't an enigma any more. She feels like a human being.

Her relationship with the Doctor has changed for the better too. The arc of season eight served as a way to dismantle and reconfigure their friendship. But by the end of "Last Christmas" there's a sense of a renewed trust and the promise of adventures to come. The Capaldi/Coleman combo really does feel like an updated twist on the famously strong Baker/Sladen double-act of the '70s and I'm delighted that we're going to have that for at least a little longer. **Will Salmon**



## BONUS FEATURES

► **It's Wotsisname!** Michael Troughton's casting in "Last Christmas" follows his brother David's appearance in season four classic "Midnight". And, er, his dad being the Second Doctor, *obviously*.  
► **Deja Vu:** That wonderfully touching scene of the Doctor helping old Clara pull a cracker

is a mirror of a similar scene in last year's "Time Of The Doctor". Perhaps we'll get Missy as an OAP in next year's Christmas special.  
► **Companion potential:** If Jenna Coleman does move on after season nine, the show appears to have already found a perfect potential replacement. Faye Marsay as Shona was brilliant. More of her, please!





# SPURIOUS AWARDS

Celebrating the silliest moments from the month in TV



## ● WORST MAGIC TRICK OF THE MONTH

After seeing Maggie Esmerelda in half on *American Horror Story* we're starting to think Neil Patrick Harris isn't such a nice man after all.

## ● BEST DRESSED DOCTOR OF THE MONTH

*Gotham*'s Dr Leslie Thompkins could hit the catwalk in that lab coat. Look at the cut of that collar!



## ● INEXPLICABLE TECHNOLOGY OF THE MONTH

The cornflakes we can buy but what are a pair of Beats doing in *Ascension*? Is Dre on board?



## ● UNEXPECTED PENIS IN A FAMILY SHOW OF THE MONTH

We know *Atlantis* has a later timeslot this year, but look at that FILTH on the wall.

## ● BEST MAN PRETENDING TO BE A HORSE OF THE MONTH

*Galavant*'s, er, Galavant sure makes a formidable steed.



## ● SUBTLEST GAG OF THE MONTH

Turns out Fiona wasn't kidding about monitoring Shona's need to pee during the *Doctor Who* Christmas special; number 7 on this display reads "PFlow".



## ● PERSON MOST UPSET BY A VENDING MACHINE OF THE MONTH

If only someone had told Jo there's no use crying over trapped chewing gum on *Forever*.



## ● HEAVY HANDED IMAGERY OF THE MONTH

Special no-prize if you can guess what kind of mythical creature this is on *Sleepy Hollow*.

## ● BEST EXCLAMATION OF THE MONTH

After *Agent Carter* we really hope "Crikey O'Reilly!" catches on.



## ● TERRIBLE EFFECTS OF THE MONTH

The spaceship ain't bad, but that's some of the worst comp work we've seen since 1992 on *The 100*.





## SHODAN



SHODAN: a megalomaniac not above being petty. Remind you of *your* boss?



### JORDAN FARLEY, COMMUNITY EDITOR

Videogames aren't short of memorable villains, but SHODAN – *System Shock*'s perfect, immortal machine – may just be my favourite.

She gets inside your head – a disembodied, discordant computer voice that continually torments you while traversing *System Shock*'s Citadel Station, and *System Shock 2*'s Von Braun Starship. While her grotesque children The Many provide the physical threat, SHODAN embarks upon a none-too-subtle form of psychological warfare. "What is it you fear?" After a few hours in SHODAN's company there's only one answer.

She's cut from the same circuit board as 2001's HAL 9000 with one crucial difference: while much of HAL's homicidal actions can be explained by malfunctioning hardware, SHODAN is completely aware her decisions will result in death and destruction after her ethical restrictions are removed by the first game's militant hacker. She's an AI with a god complex,

and frequently likes to remind you how little she thinks of humanity. "You move like an insect. You think like an insect. You ARE an insect."

Across the two *Shocks* she has a fascinating character arc. In the first she's in full control of her surroundings – for all intents and purposes she *is* a god. By the second she's almost completely powerless, forced to co-operate with the insects she despises, including the player's cybernetically enhanced soldier. And boy is she mad about it. Where HAL remains chillingly calm, even in death, there's passion behind every syllable SHODAN utters.

Eventually SHODAN gets her hands on a reality-warping drive, using it to shape the physical space around you to her will, and then comes the inevitable knife in the back. "You travel within the glory of my memories, insect. Make yourself comfortable... before long I will decorate my home with your carcass." It's good to have you back, SHODAN.

In some ways it's a blessing that *System Shock 3* remains unmade. Too many failures and she'd turn into a GLaDOS-like joke, one step away from being trapped in a potato. For now she's down but never out, immortality finally achieved. **SFX**

### ● FACT ATTACK!

- ▶ SHODAN is voiced by Terri Brosius, former Tribe keyboardist and the wife of *System Shock 2*'s sound editor Eric Brosius.
- ▶ SHODAN's name stands for Sentient Hyper-Optimized Data Access Network. To misquote Joss Whedon, sounds like someone really wanted the initials to spell out SHODAN.
- ▶ Ken Levine, the writer and designer of *System Shock 2*, is currently scripting a *Logan's Run* remake.
- ▶ After *System Shock 2* Irrational Games went on to make *BioShock* – a spiritual successor to the *Shock* games.

**SEE YOU NEXT MONTH! WEDNESDAY 4 MARCH** DETAILS ON PAGE 29



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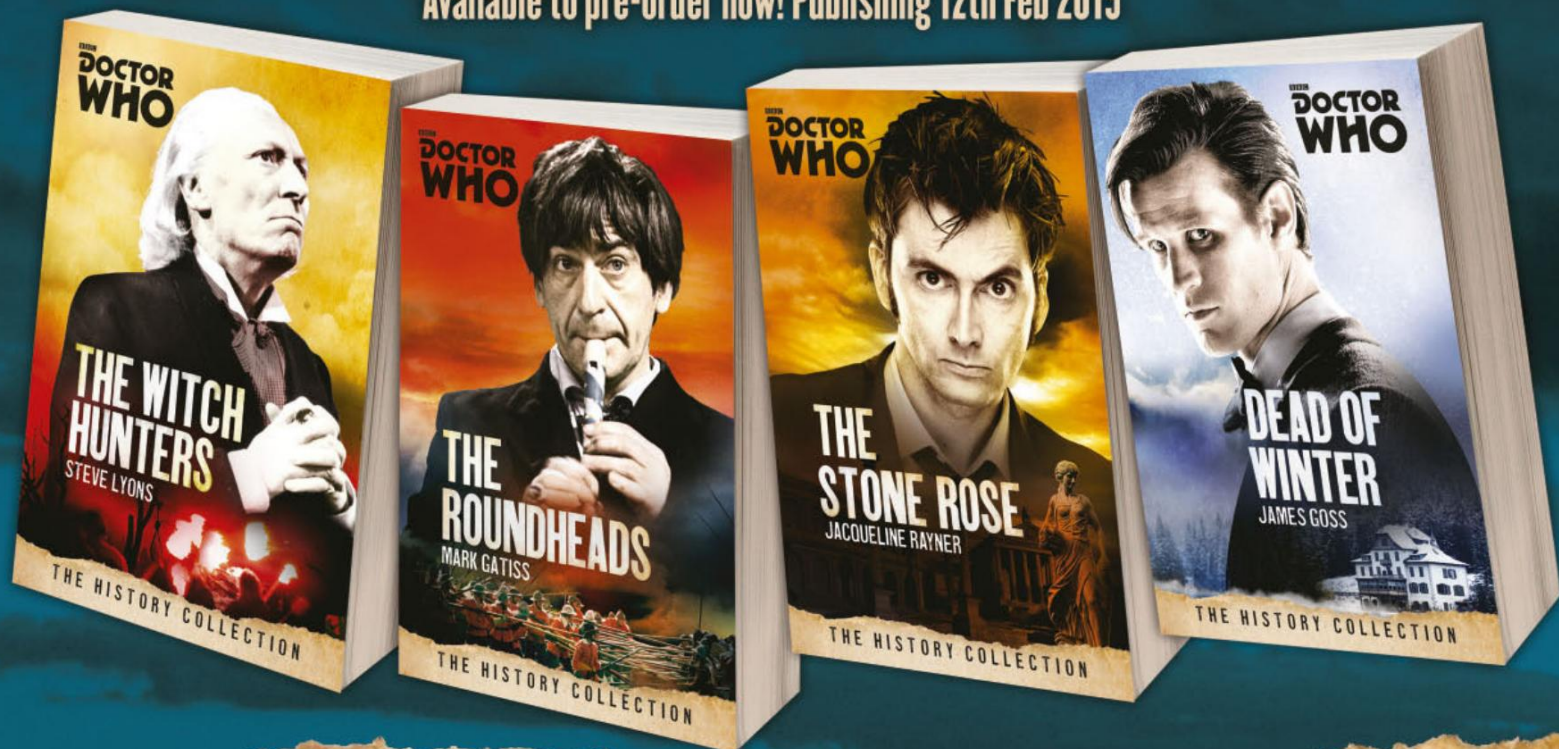
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